

ENTITLED IMAGININGS: TRISTAN TZARA, DADA, AND THE IDEA OF AFRICA

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A DISSERTATION

in

History of Art

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2021

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Hilary Renée Whitham Sánchez

This dissertation is dedicated to Cecelia Sánchez Almeida and Dolly H. R. Whitham,  
from whom I draw inspiration every day.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the invaluable resources provided by The Leonard A. Lauder Research Center for Modern Art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. A Penfield Dissertation Research Fellowship enabled me to conduct three months of fieldwork in France in the fall of 2017, while two Latner Travel Fellowships in the summers of 2015 and 2016 supported the early phases of my research.

I am grateful for the enthusiasm and assistance of the following persons... First and foremost, M. Paul Cougnard, Archivist at the Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, whose vast knowledge of the Tzara Archives and warm smile made the small room at the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève in Paris my second home. I am also deeply indebted to Madame Marie-Thérèse Tzara for her enthusiasm for my project and patience with my *Frañol*. My thanks also to Bruno Claessens at Christie's, Boris DuBois at the Archives de Paris, Colette Morel at the Société française de Photographie, and Charles-Wesley Hourdé. Nadine Schwald and Angelika Ruider at Stadtarchiv Zurich, Thomas Rosemann at Bibliothek Kunsthaus Zurich, and Alexis Malefakis at the University of Zurich Ethnographic Museum were as friendly as they were knowledgeable and helpful. My thanks to Ralf Burmeister and Philip Gorki at Berlinische Galerie as well as Lea Bischofs at Budesarchiv Berlin. Fred Backlar at Bonham's, David G. Christie and Margaret Glover at the Spencer Collection at the New York Public Library, Clare Kobasa at Prints Department at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and Janet L. Stanley at the Warren M. Robbins Library of the National Museum of African Art, James Green at Yale University Art Gallery, Molly Lieberman, Dedalus Fellow in the Archives at The Museum of

Modern Art, and Jennifer Larson, Visual Resources Archive in the Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas at The Metropolitan Museum of Art each facilitated invaluable engagements with works of art for which I am profoundly grateful. Amy Hamilton and Robyn Fleming at the Watson Library at The Metropolitan Museum of Art have my gratitude for their forbearance and assistance throughout my two years in residence at The Met.

My thinking and research have benefitted immeasurably from the incisive questions, kind guidance, and unflagging support of my committee – Michael Leja, Yaëlle Biro, Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, and Adrian Sudhalter. I deeply appreciate the encouragement and feedback on my article manuscript derived from the second chapter from Stephanie D’Alessandro, Mark Haxthausen, and Nicholas Sawicki. I am grateful for the many kindnesses of David Brownlee, Kaja Silverman, and Darlene Jackson throughout the past seven years at the University of Pennsylvania, and, more recently, Sarah Guèrin. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the contributions of my favorite antagonists André Dombrowski and Christine Poggi, whose criticism enabled me to clarify the objectives and methods of the project. My early art historical training with Susan E. Gagliardi, Ellen Handy, and Barbara E. Mundy shaped this project in innumerable intangible ways.

My appreciation for my intellectual conspirators and dear friends is beyond measure: Naoko Adachi, Keenan Bennett, Daniella Berman, Giovanni Casini, Haely Chang, Stephanie Gibson, Grant Johnson, Perrin Lathrop, Luise Mahler, Sean O’Hanlon, Z. Serena Qiu, Abbe Schriber, Marissa Vigneault, and Kristen Windmuller-Luna. I would have been utterly lost without my *copine de recherche* Léa Saint-Raymond.

This dissertation would never have been realized without my *amiga-hermana* Kate Ünver, my *prima-hermana* Michelle Whitham, my parents G. Mark Whitham and Yleana Sánchez, my spouse Steven Harrington, as well as Thomas Barrow and Murphy Ramona.

## ABSTRACT

ENTITLED IMAGININGS: TRISTAN TZARA, DADA, AND THE IDEA OF AFRICA

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“Entitled Imaginings: Tristan Tzara, Dada, and the Idea of Africa” analyzes the dada founder and poet Tristan Tzara’s practice as a performer, historian, and critic alongside his role as a collector and curator of African art. Acting like the dadaists’ own *mana figa*, this dissertation points clearly and directly at the disparities between the events - reconstructed from a variety of sources ranging from personal correspondence to newspaper articles - and the dominant scholarly accounts of those events, in order to demonstrate how the ideologies of white supremacy animated the process of delimiting the contours of modernist art. Further, “Entitled Imaginings” sheds light on Tzara’s frequently overlooked place among his contemporaries along the color line, differentiated by his understanding of analogical relationships between the form and subject matter of contemporaneous African and European cultural forms. Ultimately, this dissertation moves the historiography of so-called “primitivism” beyond the generalizations associated with the 1984 Museum of Modern Art exhibition of the same title – rehearsed as recently as 2016 in the Museum Reitberg’s *Dada Africa* – to demonstrate how specific African artworks, ethnographic texts, and ideological constructs profoundly informed the development of dada artistic practices.

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## INTRODUCTION - Beyond “Primitivism” and Primitivism: Towards a Radically Ethical History of Dada

On February 2, 1916, Hugo Ball, the German critic and performer, placed an advertisement in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. The announcement was for an artists’ cabaret to open in three days’ time at the bar of the retired Dutch merchant sailor Jan Ephraim located on the west bank of the Limmat River that bisects the Swiss city of Zurich. In his memoir, *Flight Out of Time*, Ball described the setting for that first evening: “The place was jammed; many people could not find a seat.”<sup>1</sup> By the end of the month, the soirées had reached a fever pitch: “Everyone has been seized by an indefinable intoxication. The little cabaret is about to come apart at the seams and is getting to be a playground for crazy emotions.”<sup>2</sup> Marcel Janco’s lithograph (Fig. 0.1) depicting an evening at the Cabaret Voltaire conveys the frenetic energy described in Ball’s prose. While both Ball’s account and Janco’s image are retrospective and highly mediated documents, they nevertheless can assist us partially in imagining what it might have been like to attend one of the events organized by the Romanian poet Tristan Tzara just over a century ago.

Climbing up the steep hill from the right bank of the Limmat River, one reaches a plateau of sorts and makes a left on Münsterstraße, passing the Schwarzenbach Kolonialwaren, a coffee shop and delicatessen that opened in 1910 selling dry goods.<sup>3</sup> Although Ball, Tzara, and their colleagues frequented the Café Odeon further down the hill, it’s conceivable they would have stopped in here as well. Entering the Cabaret

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<sup>1</sup> Hugo Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*, trans. John Elderfield (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 50-51.

<sup>2</sup> Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*, 51-52.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.schwarzenbach.ch/ueber-uns/geschichte>

Voltaire off Münsterstraße, you immediately walk up a flight of shallow stairs that twists back upon itself, emerging from the darkness into a low room with stone walls and dark floors. Crossing it, you meander through the bar, up three shallow steps and past the door that drops you out on Spiegelstraße, entering another, larger, space with a row of windows that let in sunlight. Spiegelstraße runs upward steeply towards the hill on which the university perches, and the windows that line the right side of this room decrease in size. As happy hour passes into the dinner hour, the sunlight streaming in the windows turns to artificial light from the gas-burning streetlamp just outside the side door. The space fills up slowly, then quickly, the scent of cigarettes and alcohol mingling with the sweat of bodies crammed together. The noses of the attendees at the dada soirées would have detected other scents as well: horse manure wafting in as the doors to the street opened and closed, as well as kerosene from the lamps lighting the stage.

On 26 February 1916, Tzara, Janco and Richard Huelsenbeck performed the first simultaneous poem entitled “The Admiral is Looking for a House to Rent (*L’amiral cherche une maison à louer*)” at the Cabaret Voltaire. Utilizing their voices as instruments, Huelsenbeck, Janco, and Tzara read the same poem aloud at the same time in multiple languages: French, English, and German respectively. As Ball recounts,

Huelsenbeck, Tzara, and Janco took the floor with a ‘poème simultan.’ That is a contrapuntal recitative in which three or more voices speak, sing, whistle, etc., at the same time in such a way that the elegiac, humorous, or bizarre content of the piece is brought out by these combinations.<sup>4</sup>

The trio’s words, overlapping one another, rendered the meaning of each phrase unintelligible to the listener, weaving an abstract aural tapestry. One can easily imagine

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<sup>4</sup> Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*, 57.



the bewilderment of some of the bar's regular patrons, working class folks perhaps just dropping in for a nip before heading home, when confronted with this cacophonous recitation. Their confusion may have been equally matched by the curious students who showed up to the bar on SpiegelgaÙe after reading Ball's advertisement in the paper.

Walter Veit has noted that German missionary Carl Strehlow's interlinear translation of Aboriginal songs – adapted by Ball for his performance that same evening – impacted Tzara's approach to transliterating African and Oceanic aural art forms for the *Soirée Alte und Neue Kunst Dada* held at the Galerie Corray the following year. The complexities associated with translating rhythmic cadence between languages discussed in Strehlow's analysis likely also informed the conception of "The Admiral is Looking for a House to Rent."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Ball's depiction of the text of the first simultaneous poetic performance in his journal *Cabaret Voltaire* (Fig. 0.2) presents an innovative approach to representing his and Tzara's shared interest in translating music and poetry across languages in print.

Across the Limmat River in another world entirely, the Galerie Corray stood in stark contrast to the little cabaret, firmly enshrined in the epicenter of the Zurich bourgeoisie just around the corner from the Paradeplatz – the nexus of the modern city – and a stone's throw from the iconic Fraumünster Church. Once a livestock market, in the nineteenth century Paradeplatz became the location of the headquarters of the two largest Swiss banks, UBS and Credit Suisse, and a junction for most of Zurich's new tram

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<sup>5</sup> Walter E. Veit, "Dada Among the Missionaries: Sources of Tristan Tzara's 'Poèmes nègres,'" *Migration and Cultural Contact: Germany and Australia*, edited by Andrea Bandhauer and Maria Veber (Sydney, AU: Sydney University Press, 2009), 62-75.

system connecting the old city with the lake.<sup>6</sup> A commercial district sprung up around it, soon housing the Sprüngli chocolate manufacturers; indeed, Coray's gallery was located inside the Sprüngli building itself! Nevertheless, despite this whimsical detail, the staid luxury commercial atmosphere of the area stands in sharp contrast to the raucous youthful one across the river. In November 1918, demonstrators against the Swiss government's response to the influenza pandemic clashed violently with military forces on Münsterplatz, just a few blocks away from the Galerie Corray.<sup>7</sup> Situating the Cabaret Voltaire and the Galerie Corray within the urban footprint of Zurich (Map 1) enriches our understanding of the type of intervention the dadaists were staging in not just European aesthetic traditions but also the infrastructures of capitalism itself. Indeed, the natural boundary of the Limmat River corresponded to a socio-economic one within the city of Zurich that Tzara crossed deliberately.

In a 1920 account, Tzara described his contribution to the *Soirée Alte und Neue Kunst Dada*, held at the Galerie Corray on May 12, 1917, as a series of poems attributed to a variety of linguistic groups indigenous to the Pacific Islands and parts of West Africa, writing, "Poèmes nègres. Traduits et lus par Tzara / Aranda, Ewe, Bassoutos, Kinga, Lorijita, Baronga."<sup>8</sup> Two of Tzara's French translations of German ethnographic texts, "Song of the Serpent" and the other untitled, were adapted from works in the fourth

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<sup>6</sup> The Credit Suisse (formerly Kreditanstalt) building at the northern end dates to 1873, the UBS (formerly Bankverein) building at the western end to 1897–99. The first horse-drawn trams circulated in 1882 and were electrified in 1896. Today Paradenplatz serves lines 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13 and 17.

<sup>7</sup> Bernard Degen, "Landesstreik (Switzerland)," *1914-1918-online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, edited by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2019). DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.11334.

<sup>8</sup> Tristan Tzara, "Chronique Zurichoise," *Dada Almanach* (Berlin: Erich Reiss Verlag, 1920), xx, transcribed in *Tristan Tzara: Œuvres Complètes*, ed. Henri Béhar (Paris: Flammarion, 1975), 328.

edition of Karl Bücher's *Arbeit und Rhythmus* published in 1909.<sup>9</sup> Tzara recalled that, "The [audience's] appetite for the mixture of instinctive meditation and ferocious *bamboula* that we managed to present, forced us to give it."<sup>10</sup> *Bamboula* referred to both a small drum and the syncopated musical cadence developed by enslaved Africans trafficked to the Americas, analogous to the Afro-Cuban *clave*.<sup>11</sup>

The French term *bamboula* was frequently a catch-all to refer to Afro-Caribbean religious rituals, sometimes conflated with Vodùn.<sup>12</sup> This practice is exemplified in Henry C. Rowland's short story, "The Bamboula," published in the September 10, 1904 edition of the New York City-based weekly magazine *Outlook*.<sup>13</sup> Rowland relates a fictional conversation between the narrator and a German botanist, Dr. Leyland, aboard a ship anchored at harbor in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Sparked by the sound of percussive instruments offshore, Dr. Leyland describes an encounter in which members of the island's Black Creole elite, Dr. Fouchère and his wife, secretively eluded him in order to participate in the *bamboula*. Ultimately, Rowland, speaking through Dr. Leyland, frames their participation as evidence of the immutability of race: even the most white-assimilated people of African descent in the French colonies cannot refrain from participating in Vodùn rituals.

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<sup>9</sup> Christian Kaufmann, "Dada Reads Ethnological Sources: From Knowledge of Foreign Art Worlds to Poetic Understanding," *Dada Africa: Dialogue with the Other*, ed. Ralf Burmeister, Michaela Oberhofer and Esther Tisa Francini (Zurich, Switzerland: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2016), 100.

<sup>10</sup> "L'appétit pour le mélange de recueillement instinctif et de bamboula féroce qu'on réussit à présenter, nous forca de donner la." Tzara, *Chronique Zurichoise*, 328.

<sup>11</sup> "bamboula," *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, ed. Joyce Kennedy, Michael Kennedy, and Tim Rutherford-Johnson (Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 2012) <https://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199578108.001.0001/acref-9780199578108-e-716>

<sup>12</sup> For the most recent study of Vodùn's rich history, its role in anthropological and art historical academic discourses, and its vast contemporary scope, see Timothy R. Landry, *Vodùn: Secrecy and the Search for Divine Power*, De Gruyter Publishing Contemporary Ethnography Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

<sup>13</sup> Henry C. Rowland, "The Bamboula," *Outlook* (New York, NY: 10 September 1904): 133.

The white public's simultaneous curiosity and revulsion towards Afro-Caribbean cultural practices exemplified in Rowland's short story shifted following the conclusion of the First World War, as African art forms originating from the continent and the Americas became amalgamated into what Rosalind Krauss has termed, "black deco."<sup>14</sup> The anonymous correspondent of *Le Journal Amusant*, writing in 1919, observed that the whole world dances the *bamboula*, and identifies "Cubisme, art nègre, jazz-band, bolchevisme," as being touched by it.<sup>15</sup> The *bamboula* thus grew to be associated with not just African sculptural forms and Haitian Vodún, but also American jazz music and European painting. Tzara conceived of the so-called *bamboula* of the Cabaret Voltaire performance program as offering a revolutionary potential that exceeded the objects selected for the First Dada Exhibition, from the anthropomorphic wooden sculpture by an unidentified Ivoirian artist lent by French dealer Paul Guillaume to the abstract textile paintings by the artists Hans (Jean) Arp and Adya Dutilh discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation.

Combining historically contextualized accounts by the participants with my own observations and imaginative powers, I have attempted to reconstitute the experience of attending the so-called *soirées nègres* at the Cabaret Voltaire and the Galerie Dada in verbal description in order to emphasize the centrality of multi-sensorial, site-specific, time-based aesthetic projects in the dadaists' practice. My account places their engagement firmly within the matrix of colonialism and imperialism that facilitated the global circulation of African material cultures and peoples during the twentieth century,

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<sup>14</sup> Rosalind Krauss, "No More Play," *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 87-118, 151-170.

<sup>15</sup> Unidentified author, "L'art nègre," *Journal Amusant* No. 8 (Paris, FR: 28 June 1919): 14.

while also applying methodologies rooted in the field of ethnography upon which the dadaists' so-called primitivist performances were predicated. The preceding introductory comments are exemplary of my methodological approach throughout this dissertation, seeking to decolonize modernist studies by, in the words of philosopher Souleymane Bachir Diagne in his recent book *In Search of Africa(s)*, "[...] making Europe one cultural area just like any other, that is, rejecting the idea that it has any pre-eminence in the field of knowledge, and thus denying it the privilege of embodying universalism."<sup>16</sup> The other equally necessary aspect of decolonizing academic thought, as Diagne observes, involves emphasizing the multiplicity of modernities co-existent and intertwined throughout the twentieth century, and valuing equally African, Asian, and Indigenous American epistemologies.<sup>17</sup> To achieve this latter objective, I have relied heavily on the work of contemporary Africanist art historians, anthropologists and ethnographers, integrating their research into my own analyses.

Throughout this dissertation I use the term "works" to refer to African cultural forms, both plastic and ephemeral, in order to emphasize the ontological incommensurability between myself and their late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century African creators. My approach draws on Eduardo Vivieros de Castro's understanding of equivocation as the central principle of anthropological study. In his formulation, comparison – the central dialectic of anthropology – neither equates nor

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<sup>16</sup> Souleymane Bachir Diagne, "Introduction," *In Search of Africa(s): Universalism and Decolonial Thought*, ed. Souleymane Bachir Diagne and Jean Loup Amselle, trans. Andrew Brown (Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2020), 3-4.

<sup>17</sup> "Instead it is the plurality of cultural spaces which is affirmed – African, Asian, Native American and Oceanian – as well as the equal dignity of endogenous systems of thought, philosophies, epistemologies, and types of knowledge." Diagne and Amselle, *In Search of Africa(s): Universalism and Decolonial Thought*, 3-4.

produces immediate or accurate translatability.<sup>18</sup> Citing French ethnographer Claude Lévi-Strauss's observations in his 1955 book *Tristes Tropiques* of the methods employed by both the Taíno and the Spaniards to test each others' humanity, Vivieros de Castro states that the incident illustrates anthropology's fundamental irony. Whereas the Europeans doubted whether other bodies had the same souls (the Inquisition), the Natives of the Caribbean doubted whether other souls had the same bodily properties (drowning).<sup>19</sup> He contends that equivocation becomes, "[...] the mode of communication par excellence between different perspectival positions—and therefore as both condition of possibility and limit of the anthropological enterprise."<sup>20</sup> In other words, the non-translatability between epistemologies is a necessary precondition for anthropological, and I contend, art historical study. "To translate is to presume that an equivocation always exists; it is to communicate by differences, instead of silencing the Other by presuming a univocality—the essential similarity—between what the Other and We are saying."<sup>21</sup>

#### A Summary of White Privilege in "Histories of the Avant-Garde"

The role of African objects in the development of European modernist art around the turn of the twentieth century was discussed by the painters, sculptors, poets, critics, and dealers themselves, including Guillaume Apollinaire, Paul Guillaume, and André Salmon in France, Carl Einstein, Paul Scheffler, and Emil Waldmann in Germany,

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<sup>18</sup> Eduardo Vivieros de Castro, "Perspectival Anthropology and the Method of Controlled Equivocation," *Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 2: no. 1 (2004): 2. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti/vol2/iss1/1>

<sup>19</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (Paris: Plon, 1955), 81-83.

<sup>20</sup> Vivieros de Castro, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Vivieros de Castro, 8.

Marius de Zayas in the United States, and Roger Fry in Great Britain.<sup>22</sup> Through exhibitions organized by de Zayas and Alfred Stieglitz at 291 and the Modern Gallery in New York, African and European art was presented simultaneously. In contrast to their contemporaries of African descent, most notably W.E.B. DuBois, the majority of Europeans and Euro-Americans deliberately disregarded the information available about these works and their original meanings, instead projecting inaccurate ideas about their makers onto these artworks and/or appropriating their formal characteristics.<sup>23</sup> One exception, overlooked until recently, was the Latvian artist and photographer Vladimir Markov, whose 1919 book, *Negro Sculpture (Iskusstvo Negrov)*, integrated anthropological information with close formal analysis of a large corpus of works and included 123 photographs illustrating 70 objects.<sup>24</sup>

During the interwar period, artists along the color line increasingly emphasized what they saw as the radical qualities of African and Oceanic works, informed by their interest in psychoanalysis, the institutionalization of anthropological study, and expanding networks among Black intellectuals living on the continent and in the

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<sup>22</sup> In chronological order – Roger Fry, “The Art of the Bushmen,” *Burlington Magazine* (1910). Karl Scheffler, “Picasso and African Sculpture Exhibition, Berlin,” *Kunst und Kunstler* (January 1914). Emil Waldmann, “Picasso and African Sculpture Exhibition, Dresden,” *Kunst und Kunstler* (March 1914). Marius de Zayas, *Statuary in Wood by African Savages: The Root of Modern Art* (New York, 1914). Carl Einstein, *Negerplastik* (1915). Guillaume Apollinaire and Paul Guillaume, *Sculptures nègres* (Paris: 1917). Paul Guillaume, “Une nouvelle esthétique,” *Les Arts à Paris* (May 15, 1919). André Salmon, “L’Art nègre (1920),” *Propos d’atelier* (1922).

<sup>23</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Negro in Literature and Art,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 49 (September 1913); W.E.B. DuBois, *The Negro* (New York, NY Holt & Company, 1915); W.E.B. DuBois, “Along the Color Line: Music and Art,” *The Crisis* 9 (January 1915).

<sup>24</sup> Z.S. Strother recently revisited Markov’s disciplinary-crossing work, demonstrating how his prescient approach to African arts can be attributed to his personal understanding of the social and material violence of imperialism as a Latvian citizen subject to Russian colonial policies. Z.S. Strother, “The Politics of the Face in the African Art Photography of Vladimir Markov,” *Vladimir Markov and Russian Primitivism*, ed. Jeremy Howard, Irena Buzinska and Z.S. Strother (London, UK: Ashgate, 2015). An excerpt from Markov’s book was included in Deutch and Flam’s anthology, Vladimir Markov, “Negro Art, 1913,” 61-66.

diaspora. In addition to his role as a collector, the Philadelphia-based pharmaceutical magnate, Alfred Barnes engaged with members of the African American community, most notably the founder of the New Negro movement, Alain Locke, drawing the attention of the white public to longstanding debates about the role of African art as models for visual artists of African descent in the United States as well as the persistence of African cultural forms in the Americas more broadly.<sup>25</sup> Although the dadaists and surrealists explicitly opposed European colonialism – distinguishing themselves from the artists cited above – their criticisms did not extend to the fundamental underlying assumptions of the colonial project, namely white supremacy.<sup>26</sup> While some might find the term “white supremacy” anachronistic, the undisputable existence of the phenomena to which it refers renders such claims specious.

Beginning with Robert Goldwater’s 1938 *Primitivism in Modern Painting*, dominant studies of the relationships between modernist artists and works from Africa and the Pacific Islands have reified misconstructions of these works, ignored the historical context of colonialism entirely, and disregarded Black and Indigenous artists’ engagements with their own cultural heritage.<sup>27</sup> The discussions and statements following

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<sup>25</sup> In March 1925, Barnes wrote an essay “Negro Art and America”, published in the *Survey Graphic of Harlem*, which was edited by Locke. Barnes also continued to support young African American artists and musicians with scholarships to study at the Foundation. Alain Locke, “Note on African Art,” *Opportunity, Journal of Negro Life* (May 1924), and “Legacy of the Ancestral Arts,” *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (1925), 254-67. Barnes commissioned Paul Guillaume to write a volume on his collections, which he and Thomas Munro largely ghost-wrote. *Primitive Negro Sculpture* was published in 1926.

<sup>26</sup> While some academics maintain that the term “white supremacy” is anachronistic, I believe that the undisputable existence of the phenomena to which it refers renders such claims specious.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Goldwater, “Introduction,” *Primitivism in Modern Painting* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1938), xvii - xxiii. Goldwater would go on to serve as the Director of Nelson Rockefeller’s Museum of Primitive Art from 1956 to 1963, curating two important exhibitions of African art which combined formalism with ethnographic context. See Susan E. Gagliardi, “Antelopes and Queens: Bambara Sculpture from the Western Sudan: A Groundbreaking Exhibition at the Museum of Primitive Art, New



the conclusion of the Second World War by artists such as Maurice de Vlaminck, André Derain, Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso about who encountered African objects when and under what circumstances aided scholars in teasing out the specificities of the earlier moments of exchange among these artists.<sup>28</sup> While Goldwater's book marked the first historiographic investigation on the topic – identifying modernist primitivism as a fictive construction with a variety of formal manifestations – his approach stands in sharp contrast to Jean Laude's never translated *French Painting and Negro Art (La Peinture française et l'art nègre)* which offers both a rigorously historical and ethically sound approach to considering the relationship between the European products and *les arts nègres* that shaped their development.<sup>29</sup> Writing in the mid-1960s, Laude emphasized the ultimate paradox of so-called primitivism, namely its rootedness in the colonial endeavor while it simultaneously sought to destabilize Western hegemony.<sup>30</sup>

Approximately two decades later, William Rubin and Kirk Varnedoe's *'Primitivism' in Twentieth Century Art: Affinities of the Tribal and the Modern*, organized for The Museum of Modern Art, propounded what scholars now term the "theory of affinities," wherein early twentieth-century European artists were believed to

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York, 1960" in Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/bamb/hd\\_bamb.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/bamb/hd_bamb.htm) (May 2016).

<sup>28</sup> Maurice de Vlaminck's recollection of his encounter with African objects in Argenteuil in 1905 (later dated to 1906) was set forth in his 1943 book *Portraits avant décès*, while Henri Matisse discussed his 1906 acquisition of a small sculpture at a curiosity shop in the rue de Rennes in his 1941 interviews with Pierre Courthion. Perhaps most famously, Picasso recalled his 1907 visit to the Trocadéro Museum in his 1937 conversations with André Malraux, which were eventually published in 1974.

<sup>29</sup> Jean Laude, "Introduction to French Painting and 'Negro Art' (1905-1914)," trans. Richard George Elliot, *Art in Translation* 5, no. 4 (2013): 441-2, 451-2.

<sup>30</sup> Unlike Goldwater or later Rubin, Laude did discuss Markov. Excerpt from Laude was included in Flam and Deutch's anthology. Jean Laude, "French Painting and Negro Art, 1968," 299-310.

be responding to both formal and psychological dimensions of non-Western objects.<sup>31</sup>

The 1984 exhibition sparked an impassioned and lengthy debate that cut across the disciplines of art history, anthropology, and philosophy, with the most notable critiques offered by James Clifford, Hal Foster, and Thomas McEvelley.<sup>32</sup> While many scholars, most notably Yve-Alain Bois and Christine Poggi, failed to account for Clifford and Foster's criticisms, Rosalind Krauss, Patricia Leighton and Michael Leja grappled directly with white modernist artists' use of African and Indigenous American art forms.<sup>33</sup> These latter studies implicitly problematized Peter Bürger's term, "the art of the avant-garde," that falsely equates European whiteness with innovation and simultaneously effaces the modernity of Black and Indigenous makers who produced the works that artists of European descent appropriated, and simultaneously segregating Black, Latinx, and Indigenous artists in analyses of self-consciously modernist artmaking.<sup>34</sup> In contrast, a robust body of scholarship on representations of Blackness in

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<sup>31</sup> William Rubin, *"Primitivism" in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1984).

<sup>32</sup> James Clifford, "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern," *Art in America* (1985): 164-77, 215, repr. in *Primitivism and Twentieth Century Art*, ed. Jack Flam and Miriam Deutsch (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 351-368. Hal Foster, "The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art," *October* 23 (Fall 1985): 58-70 repr. in *Primitivism and Twentieth Century Art*, ed. Jack Flam and Miriam Deutsch (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 384-401. Thomas McEvelley, "Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief, 1984," *Artforum* 23 (November 1984): 54-60, repr. in *Primitivism and Twentieth Century Art*, ed. Jack Flam and Miriam Deutsch (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 335-350.

<sup>33</sup> Yve-Alain Bois, "Kahnweiler's Lesson," *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 65-97, 280-293. Rosalind Krauss, "No More Play," *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 42-86. Patricia Leighton, "The White Peril and L'art nègre: Picasso, Primitivism, and Anticolonialism," *The Art Bulletin* 72, no. 4 (1990): 609-640. Michael Leja, "The Mythmakers and the Primitive: Gottlieb, Newman, Rothko and Still," *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 49-120. Christine Poggi, "Picasso's Earliest Constructions and Collages: The Arbitrariness of Representational Signs," *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism and the Invention of Collage* (Yale University Press, 1992), 30-57, 260-265.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

Europe emerged simultaneously, led by Tyler Stovall, Sieglinde Lemke, Jody Blake, Petrine Archer-Shaw, Brett A. Berliner.<sup>35</sup>

While historians of European art have yet to grapple directly and consistently with the historic and ongoing imbrication of the works, artists, and stories told about them in the ontological and physical violence of settler colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade, the work of Brett van Hoesen and Deborah Silverman are both exemplary of the direction in which the field of European modernist art history must move, namely to directly address the white supremacist foundations of European art.<sup>36</sup> Relatedly, scholars such as Vincent Debaen and Julia Kelly have published comprehensive exhumations of the complex intertwining of art history and ethnography in the twentieth century.<sup>37</sup> More recently, Helen M. Shannon and Christa Clarke have drawn attention to the interactions between modernist artists and critics of African descent in the Americas and their European contemporaries.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Tyler Stovall, *Paris Noir: African Americans and the City of Light* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1996). Sieglinde Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism* (Oxford University Press, 1998). Jody Blake, *Le Tumulte Noir: Modernist Art and Popular Entertainment in Jazz-Age Paris, 1900-1930* (University Park, MD: Penn State University Press, 1999). Petrine Archer-Shaw, *Negrophilia: Avant-garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s* (London, UK: Thames & Hudson, 2000). Brett A. Berliner, *Ambivalent Desire: The Exotic Black Other in Jazz-Age France* (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 2002). Other important resources include: Pap Ndiaye, *La condition noire: essai sur une minorité française* (Paris: Calmann Levy, 2008). Darlene Clark Hine, Tricia Danielle Keaton, Stephen Small, ed. *Black Europeans and African Diaspora* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009). Julius O. Adegunle, Hettie V. Williams, ed., *Converging Identities: Blackness in the Modern African Diaspora* (Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2013).

<sup>36</sup> Bret van Hoesen, "Weimar revisions of Germany's Colonial Past: The Photomontages of Hannah Höch and László Moholy-Nagy," *German colonialism, visual culture, and modern memory*, ed. Volker M. Langbehn, (Routledge: 2010), 197-219. Deborah L. Silverman, "Art Nouveau, Art of Darkness: African Lineages of Belgian Modernism, Parts 1-3," *West 86<sup>th</sup>* 18: 2 (Fall-Winter 2011), 19: 2 (Fall-Winter 2012), 20:1 (Spring-Summer 2013), 139-181, 175-195, 3-61.

<sup>37</sup> Vincent Debaen, *Far Afield: French Anthropology Between Science and Literature*, trans. Justin Izzo (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2014). Julia Kelly, *Art, Ethnography and the Life of Objects, Paris. c. 1925-1935* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2007).

<sup>38</sup> Helen M. Shannon, *From "African Savages" to "Ancestral Legacy": Race and Cultural Nationalism in the American Modernist Reception of African Art*, PhD. Dissertation (New York, NY: Columbia

Still other scholars have responded to Simon Gikandi's 2003 injunction to demonstrate the ways in which the objects that informed the development of modernist European art also participated in global modernity.<sup>39</sup> Jonathan Hay's two part essay, "Primitivism Reconsidered," demonstrated unequivocally that the Kru masks used as models for Pablo Picasso's *Guitar* of 1912 were part of the circuits of exchange between Europeans and Africans, and indeed, emblems of modernity in their own right.<sup>40</sup> Although Suzanne Preston Blier's recent work speculating on the role of illustrated books featuring African objects and bodies as source materials for Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* demonstrates her deep knowledge of canonical African art forms and understanding of European colonialism, it nevertheless uncritically rehearses the "affinities paradigm" propounded by Goldwater, Rubin, and others.<sup>41</sup>

While numerous conferences and exhibitions marked the centenary of Dada's founding in 2016, none engaged in rigorous, extended research into the dadaists' practices of collecting and presenting so-called *arts nègres*, the term used to refer collectively to the objects from Africa and the Pacific Islands circulating in Europe

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University, 1999). Christa Clarke, *African Art in the Barnes Foundation: The Triumph of L'Art nègre and the Harlem Renaissance* (New York, NY: Skira Rizzoli; Philadelphia, PA: in association with the Barnes Foundation, 2015).

Building on the research of Shannon and Clarke as well as Elizabeth Harney, Joshua I. Cohen's work extends our understanding of the impact of early twentieth-century African art forms on artists of African and European descent into the Cold War period, marked by development of an international aesthetic pan-Africanism. Joshua I. Cohen. *The "Black Art" Renaissance: African Sculpture and Modernism Across Continents*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2020. Elizabeth Harney, *In Senghor's Shadow: Art, Politics, and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960-1995*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004.

<sup>39</sup> Simon Gikandi, "Picasso, Africa, and the Schemata of Difference," *Modernism/Modernity* 10:3 (2003), 455-480.

<sup>40</sup> Jonathan Hay, "Primitivism Reconsidered, Part 1: A Question of Attitude," and "Primitivism Reconsidered, Part 2: Picasso and the Krumen," in *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 67/68, 69/70, (2016, 2018), 61-77, 1-24.

<sup>41</sup> Suzanne Preston Blier. *Picasso's Demoiselles: The Untold Origins of a Modern Masterpiece*. Duke University Press, 2019.

during the colonial period.<sup>42</sup> The exhibition organized by the Museum Reitberg in Zurich, *Dada Africa: Dialogue with the Other*, renewed awareness of the importance of the material cultures indigenous to Africa, the Americas and the Pacific Islands for the dadaists of Zurich and Berlin by re-presenting the preliminary research undertaken by others, including Yaëlle Biro, Serge Fachereau, Fabrice Flahutez, and Marius Hentea. However, ultimately both the exhibition catalogues and the installations did not acknowledge the objects as unique works of art with their own makers and meanings still too little understood as a result of the rupture wrought by European imperialism. *Dada Africa* thus ultimately failed to problematize the longstanding notion – promulgated first by the dada artists themselves – that these objects’ primary importance derived from their roles as instruments for advancing white art relentlessly towards some undefined yet indubitably superior end. In short, the work of decolonizing modernist art history is only in its infancy and much remains to be done.

### An Intellectual Roadmap to “Entitled Imaginings”

This dissertation, “Entitled Imaginings: Tristan Tzara, Dada, and the Idea of Africa,” accords Africa, understood as a discursive category constituted by material and immaterial forms, its central role in the development of one of the most influential modernist art movements, dada, and its historiography through a case study of one of its founders, the Romanian-born Jewish poet Tristan Tzara (1896-1963). Tzara consistently

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<sup>42</sup> Throughout this dissertation, I will leave the term “*nègre*” untranslated, given its particular etymology and contested status among Francophone intellectuals of African descent throughout the first four decades of the twentieth century. For more information see Brent Hays Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

trespassed on the divisions between fine art and popular entertainment, academic study and political activism throughout his career; tracing his movements reveals the contours of these divisions and thus their ideological limitations. Furthermore, measuring Tzara's activities as an artist, critic, and curator against his own objectives offers valuable lessons for arts practitioners today, demonstrating the possibilities and pitfalls of radical aesthetics that seek to move out of the studio and into society. Finally, comparing Tzara to his contemporaries of African, Latin American, and European descent draws attention to the ways in which racialized identities formed and fluctuated throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

Central to the project is the intellectual scaffolding created by philosopher Valentin-Yves Mudimbe in his 1994 book, *The Idea of Africa*.<sup>43</sup> Mudimbe posits Africa as a paradigm of difference, and the complexity of his idea makes his words worth quoting at length. He asserts,

[The idea of Africa] is a product of the West and was conceived and conveyed through conflicting systems of knowledge. From Herodotus onward, the West's self-representations have always included images of peoples situated outside of its cultural and imaginary frontiers. [...] The geographic expansion of Europe and its civilization was then a holy saga of mythic proportions. The only problem, and it is a big one, is that as this civilization developed, it submitted the world to its memory; but, at the same time, it seemed itself to be sanctioned by and to produce the most unimaginable evils a mad person could have imagined.<sup>44</sup>

In other words, European responses to African peoples and products as physical embodiments of this "idea of Africa" are themselves informed by the complex –and fundamentally exploitative – material conditions of European modernity.

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<sup>43</sup> V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1994).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

My project takes Mudimbe's framework as its guiding principle, considering first the role of Tzara's idea of Africa in his practice as a dadaist, and second, his interventions into modernist historiography alongside his activities within the burgeoning field of African studies. This two-pronged approach allows me to examine both the development of (Tzara's) dada as a distinct artistic movement between 1915 and 1923 and its subsequent place within the field of art history during the interwar period, alongside the shifting approaches to understanding and presenting African material cultures.

The first chapter disentangles the role of African sculptures, aural works from the Pacific Islands, and European assemblages, textiles, and paintings in Tzara's shaping of dada's omnivorous aesthetic through the First Dada Exhibition of 1917 held at the Galerie Corray in Zurich. Like their publications, compellingly analyzed by Emily Hage, dada exhibitions functioned as an arena for experimentation with local and non-initiated audiences.<sup>45</sup> This ephemeral yet essential area of the Zurich group's undertakings remains understudied, a lacuna in scholarship that this dissertation addresses throughout each of its chapters.<sup>46</sup> Collating artist accounts and memoirs, exhibition catalogues, and newspaper reviews and descriptions, I identify two previously overlooked sources of inspiration for Tzara's innovation of the simultaneous poem: an essay on the Russian composer Alexander Scriabin's synesthetic opera 'Prometheus' reproduced in Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc's 1912 *The Blue Rider Almanac* as well as the library for the

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<sup>45</sup> Emily Hage, *Dada Magazines: The Making of a Movement* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021). See also Hage, Emily. "Mise-en-page to Mise-en-scène: Intersecting Display Strategies in Dada Art Journals and Exhibitions," *Dada/Surrealism* 21: no. 1 (2018): 33-53.

<sup>46</sup> Jeanne Brun's and Severine Gossart's pictorially rich overviews of Dada exhibitions were a valuable starting point for this research. See *Dada: Paris, Washington, New York*. Paris: X. Barral: Centre Pompidou, 2010.

ethnographic collections at the University of Zurich.<sup>47</sup> While the latter remains largely lost to historians, the former demonstrates Tzara's concept of art as a multisensorial experience unfolding in time and space, underscoring the relevance of his endeavors to the disciplines of intermedia studies and phenomenological inquiry.<sup>48</sup>

Chapter two considers three aspects of the Paris dada group's 1921 production at the Champs-Élysées Theater: Philippe Soupault's blackface performance entitled *The Matchbox*; Tzara's play *The Gas Heart*; and several of the objects included in the accompanying exhibition. Incorporating these previously disregarded events into scholarly perspectives on dadaist productions acts as a corrective lens through which to discern the dadists' mobilization of various vectors of alterity, advancing the work of scholars such as Tyler Stovall, Petrine Archer-Shaw, and Pap Ndiaye, among others.<sup>49</sup> Close reading and comparative analysis of the press coverage of the events and the audience's reception illuminates the ways in which the dadaists deliberately exploited the complex dynamics of race and nationality. In contrast to Soupault's racialized burlesque,

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<sup>47</sup> L. Sabaneiev, "Scriabin's 'Prometheus,'" *Der Blaue Reiter Almanach*, ed. Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc (1912). Alexis Malefakis, "The Fate of the Han Coray Collection and the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich," *Dada Africa: Dialogue with the Other*, ed. Ralf Burmesiter Michaela Oberhofer and Esther Tisa Francini (Zurich, Switzerland: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2016).

<sup>48</sup> In February 2010, Anna Gawboy, a doctoral candidate at the Yale School of Music and Scriabin scholar, attempted to realize "Prometheus," which was the composer's final work. Gawboy worked closely with Toshiyuki Shimada, conductor of the Yale Symphony Orchestra, and Justin Townsend, an award-winning lighting designer. You can watch a documentary about their work and the performance itself on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3B7uQ5K0IU>

<sup>49</sup> Tyler Stovall, *Paris Noir: African Americans and the City of Light* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1996). Sieglinde Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism* (Oxford University Press, 1998). Jody Blake, *Le Tumulte Noir: Modernist Art and Popular Entertainment in Jazz-Age Paris, 1900-1930* (University Park, MD: Penn State University Press, 1999). Petrine Archer-Shaw, *Negrophilia: Avant-garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s* (London, UK: Thames & Hudson, 2000). Brett A. Berliner, *Ambivalent Desire: The Exotic Black Other in Jazz-Age France* (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 2002). Other important resources include: Pap Ndiaye, *La condition noire: essai sur une minorité française* (Paris: Calmann Levy, 2008). Darlene Clark Hine, Tricia Danielle Keaton, Stephen Small, ed. *Black Europeans and African Diaspora* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009). Julius O. Adekunle, Hettie V. Williams, ed., *Converging Identities: Blackness in the Modern African Diaspora* (Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2013).



which was ultimately indistinguishable from the bigoted practice it was perhaps intended to lampoon, Tzara's deliberate deployment of insult in his own heavily-accented voice was an effective tool for criticizing the increasingly-pervasive xenophobia in France.

The third chapter places Tzara's contributions to the 1930 *Exhibition of African and Oceanic Art* held at the gallery of the Pigalle Theater and his 1931 essay on collage for the French art journal *Cahiers d'art* in dialogue, furthering the work by Jean Laude, Vincent Debaen, and Julia Kelly to understand the ways in which the staging and writing of the history of modernist art and ethnography in France were intertwined.<sup>50</sup>

Longstanding misapprehensions of the complexity of sub-Saharan epistemologies, crystallized in the theory of fetishism traced back to French Enlightenment philosopher Charles de Brosses, have recently re-emerged in new theoretical vogues such as Jane Bennett's "vibrant materialism" and Bill Brown's "thing theory."<sup>51</sup> In contrast, Tzara's analysis of collage laid out in the 1931 issue of *Cahiers d'art*, underexamined until now, centers the agency of both makers and viewers in ways that align with the innovative approaches employed by the first Africanist art historians Douglas Fraser, Robert Farris Thompson, and Roy Sieber trained in the United States.<sup>52</sup> Subsequent generations of scholars, notably Z.S. Strother and her students, Susan E. Gagliardi and Babatunde Lawal, similarly blend anthropological fieldwork's attention to the experiential aspects of

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<sup>50</sup> Jean Laude, "Introduction to French Painting and 'Negro Art' (1905-1914)," trans. Richard George Elliot, *Art in Translation* 5, no. 4 (2013): 441-2, 451-2. Vincent Debaen, *Far Afield: French Anthropology Between Science and Literature*, trans. Justin Izzo (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2014). Julia Kelly, *Art, Ethnography and the Life of Objects, Paris. c. 1925-1935* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2007).

<sup>51</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010). Bill Brown, *Other Things* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2015).

<sup>52</sup> Monni Adams, "African Visual Arts from an Art Historical Perspective," *African Studies Review* 31: no. 2 (September 1989): 55-103.

research with the central tools of art history, namely connoisseurship and iconographic analysis.<sup>53</sup> Ultimately, I contend that Tzara's 1931 essay not only prefigures current Africanist art historical approaches, but also stands as a valuable example of how these methodologies can be generatively applied to other artistic traditions.<sup>54</sup>

The fourth and final chapter considers Tzara's involvement with two exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in 1935 and 1936 – *African Negro Art* and *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* – alongside his political commitments as an active member of the Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists and a perhaps short-sighted supporter of the Soviet Union.<sup>55</sup> Here I connect Tzara's resistance to influential MoMA curator Alfred H. Barr's prioritization of surrealism's object-based production over dada's collaboratively-generated and ephemeral initiatives to his ongoing

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<sup>53</sup> Susan E. Gagliardi, *Senoufo Unbound: Dynamics of Art and Identity in West Africa* (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art; Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2014). Babatunde Lawal, *The Gèlèdè Spectacle: Art, Gender, and Social Harmony in an African Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996). Z.S. Strother, *Inventing Masks: Agency and History in the Art of the Central Pende* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

<sup>54</sup> Tzara's approach was more aligned with the so-called dissident surrealists than those surrounding Breton, given their interest in and approach to ethnographic study. According to Tzara's biographer, Tzara was eventually unwilling to publish anything in *Minotaure* following his break with the Bretonia surrealists as a result of their "sterile" questionnaire published in response to the 6 February 1934 anti-corruption demonstrations all over France. (See Hentea, "Poetry and Politics in Time of War," 239-246.) Several aspects of Tzara's notion of collage and ethnography necessitates further research, particularly the role of works by Kurt Schwitters and the Study Group of Human Phenomenology that Tzara founded in 1935 along with Roger Callois and Jules Monnerot. Tzara reproduced Schwitters's 1919 collage *Merzbild K 6 Das Huthbild* in his essay for *Cahiers d'art*. That work was slated to be included in *Dadaglobe*, and it would be interesting to know what other of Schwitters's works Tzara might have been able to see either in person or in reproduction. Relatedly, the Phenomenology Study Group published a single issue of a journal entitled *Inquisitions* in June 1936, but I have not yet been able to find a copy for consultation; understanding Tzara's relationship with Callois is also important to fully fleshing out the interpenetration of African works and collage in his thinking between 1930 and 1936.

<sup>55</sup> On 10 July 1937, Tzara addressed the Second International Congress of Writers in the Defense of Culture in Valencia, Spain. In his speech, entitled "The Individual and the Writer's Conscience (*L'Individu et la conscience de l'écrivain*)," he rhetorically asked, "Are we not sufficiently aware that the liberty which infringes on the liberty of another individual is called tyranny?" (TT, ŒC 5:56) Dismissing reports of Stalin's extrajudicial executions of intellectuals by writers such as André Gidé (his account of his visit to Moscow – *Retour de l'U.R.S.S.* – was published by Gallimard in 1936), Tzara affirmed the importance of what political philosophers term "positive rights" to well-being over "negative rights" to freedom of expression.

engagements with African studies — as well as his general irritation as the primary lender to the exhibition.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, Tzara – like his contemporaries Romare Bearden (1911-1988) and David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896-1974) – understood true artistic expression as embedded in the social fabric of its makers, thus freeing it from both a fixed form and a singular meaning.<sup>57</sup> Exhuming Tzara’s understanding of what is today termed “socially-engaged art,” the final chapter of this dissertation connects its suppression within the history of modernist art to the long trajectory of institutional discrimination and tokenism of Black and Latinx artists established by art historians Helen M. Shannon, Christa Clarke, and Darby English.<sup>58</sup>

Blending biographical and social history, I situate the underpinnings for Tzara’s interest in African arts in his own experiences of marginalization, expressed through his poetry and evidenced in the press and comments of his contemporaries. Of ethnic Jewish

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<sup>56</sup> Anne Umland also discussed this episode and noted the fact that Tzara’s collections formed the nucleus of MoMA’s collections. However, her approach is a Eurocentric formalist one, focused on situating FADS in relationship to Barr’s other notorious canon-defining exhibition, *Cubism and Abstract Art* (March 2-April 19, 1936), and subsequent revisitations including William Rubin’s *Dada, Surrealism and their Heritage* (March 27-June 9, 1968). See Anne Umland, “Dada in the Collections: A Permanent Paradox,” *Dada in the Collection*, *Studies in Modern Art* 9, ed. Anne Umland and Adrian Sudhalter with Scott Gerson (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 14-41.

<sup>57</sup> “It is not necessary to renounce poetry in order to conduct revolutionary social actions, but being revolutionary is an inherent necessity to being a poet.” Tristan Tzara, *Grains et issues*, 1935 reproduced in Marius Hentea, *Tata Dada: The Real Life and Celestial Adventures of Tristan Tzara* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), 237.

Both Bearden and Siqueiros were politically active, rendering them appropriate comparative examples. However, the inter-generational, life-endangering struggle against colonialism and racism facing artists like Bearden and Siqueiros cannot be equated with Tzara’s own struggles – a fact he himself noted later in life. Madame Marie-Therèse Tzara, in conversation with the author. June 2019.

For Bearden’s analysis of the way in which *Los Tres Grandes* offered a model for Black American artists see Romare Bearden, “The Negro Artist and Modern Art,” *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* 12 (December 1934): 371-372, 390.

<sup>58</sup> Helen M. Shannon, *From “African Savages” to “Ancestral Legacy”*: *Race and Cultural Nationalism in the American Modernist Reception of African Art*, PhD. Dissertation (New York, NY: Columbia University, 1999). Christa Clarke, *African Art in the Barnes Foundation: The Triumph of L’Art nègre and the Harlem Renaissance* (New York, NY: Skira Rizzoli; Philadelphia, PA: in association with the Barnes Foundation, 2015). Darby English and Charlotte Barat, *Among Others: Blackness at MoMA* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2019).

ancestry, Tzara was not considered a Romanian national and only obtained citizenship from France, which was an informal colonial power in Romania, in 1947.<sup>59</sup> Tzara's alterity was emphasized from the moment of his arrival at the Cabaret Voltaire in 1916 as a member of what co-founder Hugo Ball termed the "Oriental-looking deputation of four little men," up until the Second World War. Referred to alternatively as a foreigner, "a small Negro" and "a Japanese Jew" by the French press, and attacked in the pages of *Comœdia* by his colleague, André Breton, the xenophobic and at times vituperatively racialized terms of the early 1920s eventually gave way to laudatory language by the early-1950s.<sup>60</sup> As Corina Jordache-Martin observes, Tzara repeatedly chose to de-emphasize his origins throughout his life, which fits within a pattern of self-reinvention through participation in the art world open to European Jews.<sup>61</sup> Yet Jordache-Martin and other literary scholars such as Laura Ceia-Minjares, Cosana Eram, Elizbaeth Legge, and Milly Heyd have not addressed the role of Tzara's collecting of non-Western objects in this process of identity transformation, a lacuna my research fills.

My work draws on critical theorist Ghassan Hage's framework of the "mis-interpellated subject" to understand the way in which Tzara's experiences may have informed his engagements with African studies. Utilizing Martinican psychoanalyst and critical theorist Frantz Fanon as a paradigmatic example, Hage argues that Fanon's

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<sup>59</sup> Lucian Boia, "Chapter 3 - How Romania Was Created," "Chapter 6 - Romanians and Foreigners," *Romania* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 59-110, and 191-225. William Oldson, *A Providential Anti-Semitism: Nationalism and Polity in Nineteenth-Century Romania*. Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1991; Vol. 193 of the Society's Memoirs series.

<sup>60</sup> Leon Bocquet, "Le Mois: Lettre de Paris" *Renaissance de l'Occident*, January 1921, TZR 684 V; Jacques Dyssord, "Les Saboteurs de la fantaisie" *Fantasio*, 1 November 1921, TZR 864 VIII, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet.

<sup>61</sup> Corina Jordache-Martin, "'Le venu de Zurich' or Tristan Tzara and the Insolence of the Margin," *Centennial Review* 42:3 (Fall 1998): 569.

colonial subject is fundamentally ambivalent.<sup>62</sup> This paradox gives rise to an affective experience of racialization that occurs in two consecutive parts, and can be best understood through philosopher Louis Althusser's notion of the simultaneity of ideological and phenomenological hailing.<sup>63</sup> Hage writes,

[The mis-interpellated subject] is hailed by the cultural group or the nation or even by modernity which claims to be addressing 'everyone.' And the yet-to-be-racialised person believes that the hailing is for 'everyone' and answers the call thinking that there is a place for him or her awaiting to be occupied. Yet, no sooner do they answer the call and reclaim their spot than the symbolic order brutally reminds them that they are not a part of everyone: 'no, I wasn't talking to you. *Piss off.*'<sup>64</sup>

Hage cites the powerful passage from Fanon's 1952 *Black Skin, White Masks* in which he experiences both ontological and phenomenological dislocation while riding on a train in France.<sup>65</sup> Fanon's feelings of forcible re-embodiment and shame precipitated by a child's comments are predicated on a shared negative assessment of blackness. For Hage, the affective experience of racism for the mis-interpellated subject is even more traumatizing than for others because she is, as it were, ambushed.

Tzara's racialization can be said to have occurred at three major transitional moments: first at his arrival in Bucharest as a young student in 1912, then in Zurich in

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<sup>62</sup> Ghassa Hage, "The Affective Politics of Racial Mis-Interpellation" in *Theory, Culture and Society* 27: 7-8 (January 2011): 113.

<sup>63</sup> Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), 121-176.

<sup>64</sup> Hage, 113.

<sup>65</sup> "'Maman! Look, a Negro! I'm scared!' Scared! Scared! Now they were beginning to be scared of me. I wanted to kill myself laughing, but laughter had become out of the question. [...] I was responsible not only for my body but also for my race and my ancestors. I cast an objective gaze over myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic features; deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, racial stigmas, slave traders, and above all, yes, above all, the grinning *Ya bon Banania*. Disoriented, incapable of confronting the Other, the white man, who had no scruples about imprisoning me, I transported myself on that particular day far, very far, from my self, and gave myself up as an object. What did this mean to me? Peeling, stripping my skin, causing a hemorrhage that left congealed black blood all over my body.'" Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, transl. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 91-92.

1916, and finally again four years later following his arrival in Paris. All three cities can be understood as “liminal” spaces insofar as they represent a threshold – both geographical and cultural – through which Tzara must pass in order to get closer to the epicenter of the European avant-gardes. Yet Tzara both buys into and rejects modernist aesthetics. His 1918 manifesto affirms this ambivalence repeatedly: “I am writing a manifesto and there’s nothing I want, and yet I’m saying certain things, and in principle I am against manifestos, as I am against principles [...]”<sup>66</sup> In my interpretation, Tzara epitomizes the mis-interpellated subject outlined by Hage. Situating his interest in African studies within his biography and the wider socio-historical context of the twentieth century enables me to determine points of departure from his avant-garde colleagues’ investments and engagements with notions of alterity instantiated in African cultural products.

The spur for this dissertation was Tzara’s collection of African works itself, which has been largely undocumented and understudied as a result of its dispersion at auction since the first public sale took place on July 8, 1969 at Sotheby’s in London. Initially, my research sought answers to the following fundamental questions: when did Tzara begin collecting African art; what works were in his collection; how did he acquire them; how were they dispersed; and where are they now? With the support of a Penfield Dissertation Fellowship and the Leonard A. Lauder Research Center for Modern Art, I conducted research to determine the scope of Tzara’s formal, gallery-based acquisitions and sales of African art in France. The library of the National Institute of Art History

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<sup>66</sup> Tristan Tzara, “Dada Manifesto (1918),” *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampisteries*, trans. Barbara Wright (Surrey UK: Alma Classics: 2011), 3.

(*Institut national d'histoire de l'art*) holds facsimiles and originals of all French auction catalogues up to the present day: between his arrival in Paris and his death, there were a total of 91 auctions of African objects. The Paris Archives (*Archives de Paris*) hold all French auction sales records, or *procès-verbaux*, organized by auctioneer and date of sale beginning in the eighteenth century. Collating this information with photographic documentation and verbal descriptions of objects in a variety of written sources, I have reached the preliminary conclusion that Tzara bought nearly all of his objects—which totaled 75 at his death in 1963—between 1925 and 1937. It appears that he made no acquisitions from galleries following the conclusion of the Second World War and his return to public life after hiding from the Nazis, although it is feasible that he participated in the informal market amongst artists and writers operating outside the gallery system.

Although my project began in earnest in 2014, this work has grown increasingly urgent. International discussions about the ethics of collecting and presenting African objects acquired during the colonial period was revived in 2018 with the release of “The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage: Towards a Relational Ethics,” a study commissioned by French President Emmanuel Macron and carried out by provenance research expert Bénédicte Savoy and the economist and theoretician Felwine Sarr assessing the French national collections.<sup>67</sup> My research on Tzara’s collection will contribute to ongoing efforts to generate a more accurate understanding of African works in the twentieth century as spoils of colonial incursion, ethnographic artifacts, and

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<sup>67</sup> Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy. *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage: Towards a Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Drew S. Burke. Paris: Ministère de la Culture, Institut des sciences sociales du politique, November 2018. [http://restitutionreport2018.com/sarr\\_savoy\\_en.pdf](http://restitutionreport2018.com/sarr_savoy_en.pdf)

complex object-experiences traveling through different but overlapping circuits, adhering to distinct but related definitions of value.

In order to avoid replicating unjust systems which prioritize the current holders of these objects over culture-bearers of African descent, I have withheld any and all detailed accounts of my findings thus far. Indeed, my work to trace the origins of the African artworks in Tzara's collections remains ongoing in order to address the ethical limits to focusing on the so-called "life of object" after its extraction from the continent. To that end, I am currently preparing an online database to make my work publicly available with the explicit goal of bringing individuals and institutions into dialogue around issues of cultural patrimony and repatriation. However much entwined with the theoretical and historiographic problems investigated in this dissertation, the work of restitution necessitates an entirely distinct set of objectives, methods, and spaces.

In summary, my dissertation achieves practical goals and addresses theoretical issues. My research determines the scope of dada founder Tristan Tzara's involvement with African art through new comprehensive analyses of his theoretical writings and curatorial activities, adding to existing knowledge of how African works were interpreted and presented in France and the United States spanning the first half of his involvement with the field between 1917 and 1940. Triangulating Tzara's ideas about African culture, both the works in his collections as well as other forms of artistic expression including jazz music, with his artistic endeavors as a founding member of dada enables me to present a robust picture of the way in which the idea of "Africa" impacted the evolution of one of the influential avant-garde movements of the twentieth century. Finally, my work draws attention to the ways in which identity formation and assignation fluctuated



throughout the twentieth century, and it seeks to reinsert Tzara's unique and sometimes prescient – though frequently unheard – voice into these histories.

## CHAPTER 1 – “Noisy Primitivism”: Objects, Performance, and the Idea of Africa in Zurich Dada

If we consider it futile, and if we don't waste our time over a word that doesn't mean anything... The first thought that comes to these minds is of a bacteriological order: at least to discover its etymological, historical or psychological meaning. We read in the papers that the *nègres* of the Kroo race call the tail of a sacred cow: DADA. A cube, and a mother, in a certain region of Italy, are called: DADA. The word for a hobby-horse, a children's nurse, a double affirmative in Russian or Roumanian, is also: DADA. Some learned journalists see it as an art for babies, other Jesuscallingthelittlechildrenuntohim saints see it as a return to an unemotional and noisy primitivism – noisy and monotonous.<sup>68</sup>

Tristan Tzara's manifesto, published in the December 1918 issue of *Dada* magazine (Fig. 1.1), iterates several possible interpretations for the avowedly meaningless word for the movement founded two years prior at the Cabaret Voltaire by an international group of draft dodging artists seeking escape from the First World War. While upon first glance these enumerations seem arbitrary, further research demonstrates a correlation between each supposed non sequitur and an aspect of the Zurich dada circle's artistic production. Considering each of the elements identified by Tzara in the Dada Manifesto as instantiated in the group's exhibitions, publications, and performances between 1916 and 1919, drawn from press accounts, ephemera, and the artists' memoirs, this chapter establishes dada as “omnivorous,” incorporating a variety of artistic forms in order to foster an inter-medial aesthetics. Tzara's approach was necessarily consumptive, predicated in the networks of exchange among white artists in Berlin, Mantova, New York, and Paris, as well as the epistemological frameworks of the emerging academic

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<sup>68</sup> Tristan Tzara, “Dada Manifesto 1918,” *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampisteries*, trans. Barbara Wright (Surrey, UK: Alma Classics, 2011), 4.

discipline of ethnography and the conditions of material extraction resulting from European colonization.

### Dada Dialogues: Mailing Modernism Across Borders

In the summer of 1917, Tzara and his colleagues launched a publication entitled *Dada*, solidifying the performances and exhibitions held at the Cabaret Voltaire and the Galerie Corray into a distinct, self-consciously identified artistic movement. Under Tzara's editorial direction, *Dada* joined an established network of art journals, but this endeavor was nevertheless unique.<sup>69</sup> *Dada* was predicated on the assembling of poetry, prose, and photographic reproductions of artworks from a variety of producers, places, and time periods in increasingly innovative arrangements. Its eclecticism, while replicating the features by which other movements defined themselves – most notably the manifesto – thus functioned simultaneously as a sincere engagement with and parody of the international avant-garde. As Emily Hage observes, “*Dada* staged itself as the essential organ of a new, atypical collective, and proposed that one need not define a movement for it to exist.”<sup>70</sup> In other words, the definition of dada, as Tzara established in the magazine's third edition, is that there is none.

Adrian Sudhalter's language describing the impetus behind Tzara's 1920 unrealized Dadaglobe project also illuminates the foundational premise of the magazine

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<sup>69</sup> Other artists' publications of the time included *Der Sturm* (edited by Herwarth Walden, Berlin, 1910–1924), *Sic* (edited by Pierre Albert-Birot, Paris, 1916–1919), *Nord-Sud* (edited by Pierre Reverdy, Paris, 1915–1918), *291* (edited by Paul B. Haviland, Marius de Zayas, and Agnes Ernst Meyer, New York, 1915–1916), *391* (edited by Francis Picabia, Barcelona, New York, Zurich, Paris, 1917–1924), and *Noi* (edited by Enrico Prampolini and Bino Sanminiatielli, Rome, 1917–1925).

<sup>70</sup> Emily Hage, “Dissemination: The Dada and Surrealist Journals,” *A Companion to Dada and Surrealism*, ed. David Hopkins (Chichester, West Sussex, UK : Wiley Blackwell, 2016). ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/upenn-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4418731>.

itself. She notes that, "contributions might travel through the mail as surrogates, in effect, for individuals forbidden to do so."<sup>71</sup> While the swift rollout of methods to identify and constrain the movement of people across national boundaries in Europe after 1919 that Sudhalter emphasizes cannot be dismissed, it is essential to acknowledge that these systems of surveillance and control were already in place in the parts of Asia and West Africa subject to Belgian, British, French, and German colonization, as well as in the *metropole* for anti-colonial activists.<sup>72</sup> The wartime conditions present at dada's founding around 1916 prohibited people and objects from traveling as easily in European urban centers as elsewhere. Like the contributions sent to Tzara for *Dadaglobe*, *Dada* acted as an extension of the personae of the dada participants sequestered in Zurich's lakeside valley, enabling them to share their work widely and to demonstrate their affiliations with other artists and groups.

Indeed, dada members were enmeshed in a variety of networks, some established prior to 1914 and others developed via correspondence throughout the war. Four were previously affiliated with one another through German-speaking circles in Switzerland and Germany. Together with Oskar Lüthy and Walter Helbig, Hans (Jean) Arp founded the artists' association *Der moderne Bund* in 1911. The group would pave the way for the reception of modernism in Switzerland through exhibitions in Lucerne that same year and

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<sup>71</sup> Adrian Sudhalter, "How to Make a Dada Anthology," in *Dadaglobe Reconstructed*, ed. Adrian Sudhalter (Kunsthhaus Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2016), 27.

<sup>72</sup> Daniel Brückenhaus, *Policing Transnational Protest: Liberal Imperialism and the Surveillance of Anticolonialists in Europe, 1905-1945* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017). The third chapter, "The Expansion of the French Colonial Surveillance Network in Western Europe, 1918-1925," is especially important for fully understanding the wider, racialized context for Tzara's surveillance by the French secret police after relocating to Paris in 1919.

Zurich the following.<sup>73</sup> Arp was also connected with the Dutch artists Otto van Rees and Adriana “Adya” Dutilh; and the group exhibited together at the Galerie Tanner in Zurich in 1915. An autodidact, Van Rees met Dutilh around 1903 when she joined the Agriculture Colony of the International Brotherhood located in Blaricum founded by his father.<sup>74</sup> The two left the Netherlands the following year, taking up residence among other young artists living and working at the Bateau-Lavoir in Montmartre, and eventually relocated to Ascona in 1912.<sup>75</sup> Arp, Dutilh, Lüthy, and van Rees – though perhaps not all acquainted with one another in person just yet – were included in the landmark First German Autumn Salon of 1913 organized by the critic and dealer Herwarth Walden at his gallery in Berlin, *Der Sturm*.

Tzara began to correspond with Walden in 1916, but no plans for loans to the dada exhibitions were realized. Founded in March 1910, Walden’s *Der Sturm*, or *The Storm*, began as a publishing house, eventually turning away from literature and towards the fine arts.<sup>76</sup> In 1912 Walden opened the gallery with which he would become synonymous in the fashionable Tiergarten district of Berlin. The inaugural exhibition featured the work of Franz Marc and Wassily Kandinsky, making *Der Sturm* the third location in Europe to show the work of the *Blaue Reiter* group – an important influence

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<sup>73</sup> “Oskar Wilhelm Lüthy,” *Benezit Dictionary of Artists* (Oxford University Press, 31 October 2011)

<sup>74</sup> Marida Vermeulen, “Adriana Catharina Dutilh,” *Online Dictionary of Dutch Women Artists*, Huygens ING <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/vrouwenlexicon/lemmata/data/dutilh>; adapted from Marloes Huiskamp’s entry in *Digital Women's Lexicon of the Netherlands*.

<sup>75</sup> “Otto van Rees,” *Benezit Dictionary of Artists* (Oxford University Press, 31 October 2011)

<sup>76</sup> Barbara Alms, “*Der Sturm* - Corporate Identity of an International Art Conglomerate,” *Der Sturm: Herwarth Walden’s “Sturm” in Berlin*, edited by Barbara Alms and Freya Mulhaupt (Zurich: Galerie Art Focus, 2002), 15-19. Freya Mulhaupt, “Herwarth Walden: The Turning Point in Art,” *Der Sturm: Herwarth Walden’s “Sturm” in Berlin*, eds. Barbara Alms and Freya Mulhaupt (Zurich: Galerie Art Focus, 2002), 29-32.

on the dadaists, discussed further below.<sup>77</sup> A school and bookstore followed in 1916 and 1917, but the war disrupted Walden's plans to set up outposts in Paris and Geneva.<sup>78</sup> As Kate Winskell has demonstrated, Walden's personal politics ended up embroiling *Der Sturm* in the German state's cultural propaganda efforts. Reports submitted to the Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst chart the course of Walden's work in Norway and Sweden during the First World War clearly.<sup>79</sup> However, I found no evidence that Walden attempted to infiltrate the dada exhibitions organized by Tzara in Zurich on behalf of the German state. Indeed, Walden did not even reproduce any of the dada manifestos in *Der Sturm*, presumably because by then the group was publishing its own eponymous periodical.

In addition to their ties to the German speaking avant-garde community, the dadaists maintained connections with artists in France, facilitated by Arp or van Rees, both of whom had spent time in Paris before their relocation to Switzerland. While Esther Tisa Francini maintains that the Paris-based dealer Paul Guillaume approached Tzara in March of 1916, "asking him to grant African art a place in the Dada movement," I have found no evidence to support her assertion.<sup>80</sup> The correspondence between the two in fact suggests the opposite, namely that the dealer's loans followed a request from the young poet. In July of 1916, Guillaume offered to send paintings by Giorgio de Chirico,

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<sup>77</sup> Mulhaupt, "Herwarth Walden: The Turning Point in Art," 29-32.

<sup>78</sup> Barbara Alms, "Der Sturm - Corporate Identity of an International Art Conglomerate," *Der Sturm: Herwarth Walden's "Sturm" in Berlin*, eds. Barbara Alms and Freya Mulhaupt (Zurich: Galerie Art Focus, 2002), 15-19.

<sup>79</sup> Kate Winskell, "The Art of Propaganda: Herwarth Walden and 'Der Sturm,' 1914-1919," *Art History* 18, no. 3 (September 1995): 318, 327-33.

<sup>80</sup> My attempts to contact Francini via email were unsuccessful. Esther Tisa Francini, "'Hot Spot of International Energies', 'The Network of Dada Artists, Dealers, and Collectors of African Art,'" *Dada Africa: Dialogue with the Other*, ed. Ralf Burmeister, Michaela Oberhofer, Esther Tisa Francini (Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess for the Museum Rietberg, 2016), 90.

Maurice Utrillo, and Amedeo Modigliani in his possession, along with a few African works.<sup>81</sup> While by November his participation seemed increasingly unlikely, largely as a result of Tzara's letters being intercepted by the French censors, Guillaume managed to send two objects for inclusion in the exhibition.<sup>82</sup> In September of the following year Guillaume tried unsuccessfully to recruit Tzara to be his agent for selling African art in Zurich.<sup>83</sup>

Tzara and his colleagues were also in dialogue with the Italian futurists, reproducing announcements about their activities in Milan and Rome in the *Dada* periodical, although I have found no evidence that any works by Italian artists other than de Chirico (whose contribution was lent by French dealer Guillaume) were included in the First Dada Exhibition. The Mantova group of futurists' first encounter with dada occurred in September of 1917 when Tzara's *Dada Manifesto* and *Amer alle soirée Pelamide* were included in the third issue of the Italian journal *Procellaria*.<sup>84</sup> Gino Cantarelli wrote to Tzara on February 24, 1917, expressing his admiration for his poetry, and Tzara subsequently invited him to contribute something to the next issue of *Dada*.<sup>85</sup> Tzara had other friends in Italy, but his primary contacts, in addition to Cantarelli, were Aldo Fiozzi and Otello Rebecchi.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Paul Guillaume to Tristan Tzara, 16 July 1916, TZR C 1846-1862, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

<sup>82</sup> Paul Guillaume to Tristan Tzara, 29 November 1916, TZR C 1846-1862, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

<sup>83</sup> Paul Guillaume to Tristan Tzara, 3 September 1917, TZR C 1846-1862, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

<sup>84</sup> Melania Gazotti, *Futurismo e Dada: Da Marinetti a Tzara* (Cinisello Balsamo, Milano: Silvana, 2009), 16.

<sup>85</sup> Gazotti, *Futurismo e Dada: Da Marinetti a Tzara*, 17-18.

<sup>86</sup> Tzara traveled to Milan and then Venice in the summer of 1920. In anticipation of his arrival, the group launched a dada-inspired magazine entitled *Bleu* of 3 issues (July, August/September, and January, respectively). Gazotti, 19.

European artists' and critics' interest in the cultural forms of Africa and the Pacific Islands was facilitated transitively through the same networks of exchange for their own publications.<sup>87</sup> Artists photographed objects seen in European ethnographic collections and dealers' salesrooms as well as incorporated them into their paintings and prints. One notable example is the Dresden-based Die Brücke collective. Demonstrating an interest in African visual culture as early as 1903, artists Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, August Macke, and Carl Schmidt-Rottluff visited an exhibition organized by the Dresden Ethnographic Museum.<sup>88</sup> The trio also saw African objects in the Hamburg-based dealer Heinrich Umlauff's Ethnological Institute and the Berlin Ethnographic Museum. A family-owned antiquities trade firm founded in 1868, J.F. G. Umlauff would become one of the most influential dealers for Germany's ethnographic museums, and, in contrast to his French colleagues, actually organized or funded expeditions to West Africa and the Pacific Islands to gather items for sale in Europe.<sup>89</sup> Art historian Jill Lloyd believes that artworks selected by Macke for reproduction in the group's 1912 almanac entitled *The Blue Rider (Der Blaue Reiter)* (Fig. 1.2) may have been purchased for the artist's personal collection from Umlauff.<sup>90</sup> Two notable examples include a Cameroonian door

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<sup>87</sup> One notable exception was Paul Gauguin, who traveled to the Pacific Islands repeatedly, collecting objects and enslaving Indigenous children. See Elizabeth Child's contribution, "Taking back Teha'amana: feminist interventions in Gauguin's legacy," to *Gauguin's Challenge: New Perspectives after Postmodernism*, Norma Broude, ed. (New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2018).

<sup>88</sup> For comprehensive analysis of the development of German ethnographic museums from the mid-nineteenth century until the end of the First World War, see Glenn H. Penny, *Objects of Culture: German Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

<sup>89</sup> Yaëlle Biro and Constantin Petridis, "Une collection pionnière: Acquisitions d'art congolais au Penn Museum," *Tribal* XVII-3, no. 68 (Summer 2013): 104.

<sup>90</sup> Jill Lloyd, "Expressionist Wood Carvings: Ideals of Authenticity," *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 70.



panel misattributed as a mask, and a *kwele* mask included in Kandinsky's "On Stage Composition."<sup>91</sup>

In addition to reproducing images of specific objects the collective found compelling, *The Blue Rider* also included criticism and theoretical explorations, such as Macke's essay on masks. Macke charts what Lloyd terms "a cross-temporal sense of the primitive," asserting that artistic expression is both universal and personal.<sup>92</sup> He maintains, "Every genuine art form is a manifestation of our inner life," and concludes that, "The difference amongst these expressions consists in sound, word, color and materials such as wood, stone, or metal."<sup>93</sup> His claims prefigure those laid out by the futurist artists Giacomo Balla and Fortunato Depero three years later, discussed further below, namely that modern art must develop new media and formulas of representation.

Macke establishes a shared quality of sublime expression between medieval Europeans, his contemporaries from Africa, and ancient Pacific Islanders. He writes,

The bronze casts of the inhabitants of Benin (West Africa), discovered not until 1889, the idols of the Easter Islands in the Pacific Ocean, the collar of the chief from Alaska, and the wooden mask from New Caledonia speak the same strong language as the chimeras on the Paris Notre-Dame Cathedral and the gravestone in Frankfurt Chapel. As if to mock European aesthetics, forms speak a sublime language everywhere, and as early as in children's play, through the hat of a model, and in the joy of a sunny day, materialize inwardly invisible ideas.<sup>94</sup>

Asserting an equivalence between art forms of various times and places across the globe, from medieval French sculpture to contemporary German children's art, his comments

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<sup>91</sup> Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac*, ed. Klaus Lankheit (New York, NY: Viking, 1974), 86, 190.

<sup>92</sup> Jill Lloyd, "Urban Exoticism in the Cabaret and Circus," *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 86.

<sup>93</sup> August Macke, "The Masks," *August Macke*, trans. Walter Cohen (Parkstone International, 2013), 52, 60.

<sup>94</sup> Macke, "The Masks," 66.

exemplify what I term the “chronological telescoping” unique to the modern period.

European artists placed their counterparts of African and Asian descent in a paradoxically undefined past yet firmly inferior evolutionary position, reflective of the white supremacist teleology prevalent in ethnography and popular culture.

Expressionist artists incorporated masks directly into the scenes represented in their paintings as well as transposed their stylistic qualities onto their depictions of human subjects, such as Karl Schmidt-Rottluff’s 1918 woodcut lithograph *Girl from Kaunas (Mädchen aus Kowno)* (Fig. 1.3). Artists hired Black performers as models beginning in 1911, as evidenced in the photograph of Sam and Milli of the Zirkus Schumann in Kirchner’s Dresden studio (Fig. 1.4).<sup>95</sup> While some artists placed these models in imagined exotic scenes, others depicted contemporary persons of African descent as modern urbanites, such as in Kirchner’s 1911 painting *Negro Dance* (Fig. 1.5). Franz Marc and Wassily Kandinsky, the editors of *The Blue Rider*, chose to reproduce images of both West African objects and the German woodblock prints and paintings that they inspired like those cited above; however, the dadaists reproduced an image of a West African artwork only once: in the catalogue *Tzara* produced for the First Dada Exhibition (Fig. 1.21).

Nearly concurrently, in Paris, artists sought out objects from France’s African and Asian colonies on display in ethnographic museums and flea markets. As Joshua I. Cohen has recently demonstrated, the Fauve artists André Derain, Henri Matisse, and Maurice de Vlaminck found lessons on the relationship of volume to color and mass, and of line to

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<sup>95</sup> Jill Lloyd, “The Brücke Studios: A Testing Group for Primitivism,” *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 30-31.

abstraction, through specific objects in The British Museum, a curio shop in the rue de Rennes, and a shelf behind a bar along the Seine.<sup>96</sup> While the fauves preceded the cofounders of cubism in these discoveries, Pablo Picasso's interest in African objects dominates art historical discussions and analysis.

The Spanish artist's interest in African objects – like his French and German counterparts – was rooted in his own struggle with Western pictorial conventions.<sup>97</sup> In a conversation with André Malraux in 1937, Picasso admitted that he had studied African objects prior to 1907. He described his first visit to the Musée d'ethnographie du Trocadéro, recalling that, “The masks weren't like other kinds of sculpture. Not at all. They were magical things.”<sup>98</sup> Despite Picasso's previous refusal to acknowledge the role of these objects – whether through in person encounter or mediated through illustrated sources such as Leo Frobenius's 1898 book *Die Masken und Geheimbünde Afrikas* (*African Masks and Secret Societies*) – in his conception of *Les Femmes d'Alger*, contemporary gallerists, critics and other artists consistently associated the two together.<sup>99</sup>

*Picasso: Negerplastik*, organized by Otto Feldmann for the Neue Galerie in Berlin in 1913-14 was one of the first exhibitions to pair cubist works by Picasso with African

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<sup>96</sup> Joshua I. Cohen, “Fauve Masks: Rethinking Modern ‘Primitivist’ Uses of African and Oceanic Art, 1905-8,” *The Art Bulletin* 99, no. 2 (June 2017): 136-165.

<sup>97</sup> Gikandi, “Picasso, Africa, and the Schemata of Difference,” 456.

<sup>98</sup> Pablo Picasso, “The Discovery of African Art, 1906-07,” *Primitivism and Twentieth Century Art: A Documentary History*, ed. Jack Flam and Miriam Deutch, ( Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 33.

<sup>99</sup> Suzanne Preston Blier, “The Sorcerer's Apprentice,” *Picasso's Femmes d'Alger: The Untold Origins of a Modern Masterpiece* (Duke University Press, 2019), 111-151.

sculptures, albeit in separate rooms.<sup>100</sup> The exhibition – consisting of sixty-six works by Picasso, including forty-four paintings from the period 1901–13, twenty-two works on paper, and nineteen sculptures from sub-Saharan Africa – represents a collaboration between Feldmann, dealer Josef Brummer and critics William Udhe and Carl Einstein.<sup>101</sup> Spaced apart on pedestals, the Neue Galerie exhibition offered an opportunity for artists to study African sculptures in the round, instead of tightly crammed into glazed cabinets of Europe’s ethnographic museums.<sup>102</sup> Despite the preponderance of works by Picasso, the gallery selected a closeup profile view of an anthropomorphic sculpture from what is today Côte d’Ivoire (Fig. 1.6) for the catalogue’s cover. Of the nineteen African objects, images of only three survive, reproduced in critic Einstein’s book of the following year, *Negerplastik* (plates 13, 56, and 70), discussed elsewhere in this chapter.<sup>103</sup>

The dadaists’ network of intellectual interlocutors in Europe transcended national boundaries through both private correspondence and publicly circulated periodicals, facilitated by the postal systems of the combatant governments of which the dadaists were critical. Incorporating reproductions of both so-called “advanced” artworks by Europeans and their so-called “primitive” African contemporaries, alongside commentary by white artists and critics, this far-flung ecosystem relied on colonial currents to sweep objects from both rural areas and urban centers along the coast of Africa to European

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<sup>100</sup> Yaëlle Biro, “De la Foire aux Jambons à ‘Picasso u. Negerplastik’,” *Fabriquer le regard: Marchands, réseaux et objets d’art africains à l’aube du XXe siècle* (Paris: Les Presses du réel, 2018), 87-90.

<sup>101</sup> Biro, 89-90. Charles Haxthausen cites a review by the critic Adolf Behne for these numbers. Charles Haxthausen, “Chapter Three: Negro Sculpture,” *A Mythology of Forms: Selected Writings on Art by Carl Einstein*, trans. and ed. Charles Haxthausen (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 38-39.

<sup>102</sup> Glenn Penny, “Chapter Five: Museum Chaos,” *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany* (Durham, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 177-261.

<sup>103</sup> Charles Haxthausen, Note 35 in “Chapter Three: Negro Sculpture,” *A Mythology of Forms: Selected Writings on Art by Carl Einstein*, trans. and ed. Charles Haxthausen (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 348.

artists' studios. These exchanges of printed matter facilitated the daring typography associated with the movement, as well as the dadaists' exhibitions and performances.

### Dada Objects: From Ethnography to Folk Art

Dada exhibitions functioned as one arena for experimentation with local and non-initiated audiences. Although exhibitions were integral to their practices, this ephemeral area of the Zurich group's undertakings remains understudied, a lacuna in scholarship that this dissertation aims to address throughout each of its chapters.<sup>104</sup> Although reliant on a patchwork of records, including artist accounts and memoirs, exhibition catalogues, and newspaper reviews and descriptions, one can begin to approximate checklists for specific displays as well as to generate hypotheses about how the works were arranged in the spaces. Ultimately, the dadaists adopted what I am terming an "omnivorous aesthetic," incorporating a variety of media throughout their exhibitions between 1916 and 1919.

In *Flight Out of Time*, Ball described the visual component of the artists' gathering held on February 5, 1916 at the bar he had renamed the Cabaret Voltaire for the occasion as comprising both fine and commercial art.<sup>105</sup> Referring to himself and his partner Emmy Hennings, Ball's inventory includes posters, paintings, and poetry.<sup>106</sup>

Tzara continued the ad hoc nature of the visual art displays at the Cabaret Voltaire

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<sup>104</sup> Jeanne Brun's and Severine Gossart's pictorially rich overviews of Dada exhibitions were a valuable starting point for this research. See *Dada: Paris, Washington, New York*. Paris: X. Barral: Centre Pompidou, 2010.

<sup>105</sup> Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*, 50-51.

<sup>106</sup> While I have been unable to locate Janco's *Archangels* or find a reproduction of this work, other paintings from this time in the artist's career, such as his recreation of his lost 1916 print depicting the scene inside the Cabaret Voltaire itself discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, share an expressionist style incorporating bold colors and abstracted forms.

exemplified in Ball's description at the First Dada Exhibition (Fig. 1.7) held at the Galerie Corray. The small, coverless catalogue of just sixteen pages in the library at the Kunsthaus Zurich provides an inventory of some of the objects Tzara selected. Tzara's *Chronique Zurichoise*, published in 1920, includes a brief entry on the First Dada Exhibition dated February 1, 1917; the list of artists corresponds precisely with the exhibition catalogue.<sup>107</sup> While it remains unclear if the booklet presents the totality of the objects selected for display, and is itself a partial record lacking both a cover and an introductory note, it nevertheless provides an invaluable record of Tzara's curatorial choices in the absence of a checklist or installation photos.<sup>108</sup>

The objects include two abstract works – Marcel Janco's *Tranquility (Tranquillite)* (Fig. 1.8) and Johann Wilhelm von Tscharner's *Forms (Formen)* (Fig. 1.9); as well as three works associated with the German expressionist style of painting – Otto van Rees's *Mother and Child (Mutter und Kind)* (Fig. 1.10), von Tscharner's *Still-life (Stilleben)* (Fig. 1.11), and Helbig's *Composition (Komposition)* (Fig. 1.12). The booklet also includes two works clearly indebted to cubism: Lüthy's *Madonna* (Fig. 1.13) and Mopp's *Letters Journal Cigarettes, Opus 2 (Lettres Journaux Cigarettes, Opus 2)* (Fig. 1.14). Two paintings by Hans Richter, *Inner Music (Innerlichte Musik)* (Fig. 1.15) and *Simultaneous Landscape (Simultaneistische Landschaft)* (Fig. 1.16), hover between cubism and abstraction.

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<sup>107</sup> Tristan Tzara, "Chronique Zurichoise" (1920), transcribed in *Dada est tatou, Tout est dada*, ed. Henri Béhar (Paris: Flammarion, 1996), 327.

<sup>108</sup> It is possible that the photographs Tzara reproduced in the booklet may not have been the works ultimately exhibited in the First Dada Exhibition, however, for the purposes of argument I am assuming that they are.

Four other artworks occupy contentious classificatory positions between fine and so-called decorative art or folk art: Adya van Rees-Dutilh's *Composition in Silk* (*Komposition in Seide*) (Fig. 1.17), two textile works by Jean Arp, entitled *Pathetic Symmetry* (*Symétrie pathétique*) (Fig. 1.18) and *Diagonal Composition – Crucifixion* (Fig. 1.19), and Janco's *Construction 2* (Fig. 1.20). Tzara also secured the loans of a wooden figural sculpture by an unidentified West African artist (Fig. 1.21) and a painting by Giorgio de Chirico entitled *Evil Genius of a King* (*Le mauvais genie d'un roi*) (Fig. 1.22) from the French dealer Paul Guillaume. While no documentation between the parties exists that might provide further insights into how transportation across national lines during the First World War occurred, the majority of the works Tzara selected for the First Dada Exhibition were part of dada patron, gallerist, and educator Han Coray's commercial stock or belonged to the artists themselves.

The variety of objects Tzara selected for the First Dada Exhibition can be tied to the manifesto published the following year, in which he identifies a plethora of materials as appropriate for the modernist artist. He writes, "The new artist protests: he no longer paints (symbolic and illusionistic reproduction) but rather creates directly in stone, wood, iron, tin, rocks and locomotive organisms that can be turned about on any side by the limpid wind of momentary sensation."<sup>109</sup> In Tzara's formulation, the dadaist draws on both contemporary and traditional artistic materials in direct and innovative ways to create new forms.

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<sup>109</sup> Tzara, "Dada Manifesto 1918," in *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampisteries*, trans. Barbara Wright (Surrey, UK: Alma Classics, 2011), 7.

The latter media – iron and wood – are referenced in his essay, *Note sur l'art nègre*, published the year prior in the September-October issue of French poet Pierre Reverdy's journal *SIC*. Tzara here articulated his understanding of the relationship between arts from Africa, Europe, and the Pacific islands, "The art is grouped in camps, each with its special skills, within its own frontiers. The influences of a foreign nature which were mixed up in it are the rags of the Renaissance lining still sticking to the souls of our fellow man, for my brother's soul has sharp branches, black with autumn."<sup>110</sup> For Tzara, European art is stagnant, each medium siloed from the other, as part of the "hangover" from the Renaissance. He continues, describing this artist's counterpart,

My other brother is naïve and good, and laughs. He eats in Africa and along the South Sea islands. He concentrates his vision on the head, carves it out of wood that is hard as iron, patiently, without bothering about the conventional relationship between the head and the rest of the body. What he thinks is: man walks vertically, everything in nature is symmetrical. While working, new relations organize themselves according to the degree of necessity; that is how the expression of purity came into being.<sup>111</sup>

For Tzara, African and Oceanic sculptors work innovatively, focusing solely on expressive necessity, and thus their approach should be the foremost model for European artists.

Arp's *Pathetic Symmetry* and Lüthy's *Madonna* were reproduced in the first issue of the journal *Dada* in a similar arrangement to the exhibition catalogue, namely that each vertically-oriented artwork encompassed an entire page. Emily Hage attributes this to Tzara's desire to replicate the experience of contemplation of individual works within

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<sup>110</sup> "Note sur l'art nègre," *SIC* (September-October 1916): xx, translated in Tristan Tzara, "Note on negro art," *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampisteries*, trans. Barbara Wright (Surrey, UK: Alma Classics, 2016), 57.

<sup>111</sup> Tzara, "Note on Negro Art," 57.



the gallery setting, maintaining that he would have laid out the exhibition space one work at a time. She asserts that, “The newer kind of installation reflected a preoccupation with visitor experience during this period, and generally encouraged the intimate, interior, individual contemplation of one piece at a time.”<sup>112</sup> However, I have found no evidence that Tzara deployed the exhibition strategies she describes.

On the contrary, a brief review in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* suggests the exact opposite. The anonymous correspondent observed that objects were arranged at varying heights along the walls as well as above the doorways.<sup>113</sup> Thus, if Tzara’s installation at the Galerie Corray was more crowded - aligned with private homes and bars - than scholars have assumed, the arrangements in the first issue of *Dada* are most likely a reflection of his willingness to work within the limitations of conventional design strategies and printing techniques. The installation strategies deployed by Tzara at the Galerie Corray contrasts sharply with the conservative layout of the first issue of the magazine. The innovations of the Galerie Corray in January-February 1917, I contend, sparked those that would appear in *Dada*’s third issue of July 1917, reflecting Tzara’s response to both local and international conditions of object circulation and exchange informed by the First World War and Belgian, French, and German colonialism.

Indeed, by 1919, Tzara had created more sophisticated layouts for the publication, enabling him to replicate in miniature the juxtapositions of the Galerie Corray. For example, in the double issue of the journal *Dada* no. 4-5, also known as the Anthologie Dada, he rotated van Rees-Dutilh’s *Composition in Silk* ninety-degrees and juxtaposed it

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<sup>112</sup> Emily Hage, “Mise-en-page to Mise-en-scène: Intersecting Display Strategies in Dada Art Journals and Exhibitions,” *Dada/Surrealism* 21: no. 1 (2018): 6.

<sup>113</sup> Unidentified correspondent, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, February 12, 1917. Zentralarchiv, Zurich.

with a poem by Louis Aragon entitled *Statue* (Fig. 1.23). By placing its caption immediately underneath, Tzara signaled to his readers that they needed to turn the magazine on its side in order to look at van Rees-Dutilh's work. The process of manual manipulation thus effectively transforms the printed page into a bodily experience that almost reverses the relationship between the viewer and the work of art: that of circumambulating the art space in opposition to that of holding the artworks in one's hands.

One institution absent from scholarly discussions on the role of African and Oceanic objects in the first dada performances and exhibitions is the University of Zurich's Ethnological Museum. This may perhaps be accounted for by the fact that there are no photographs of the early installations in either the university archives or in contemporary illustrated media. Nevertheless, traces of the museum and its role in Zurich life during the dada era can be discerned.

An unidentified correspondent for the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* reported on December 5, 1916 that the university had opened its ethnographic collections to the public, but no specifics about the contents of the collections or their manner of display was included in the announcement.<sup>114</sup> Perhaps the lack of detail can be attributed to the fact that, as Verena Münzer has demonstrated, the museum's doors actually didn't open until nearly two weeks later on December 16.<sup>115</sup> The collections, which had grown slowly since the museum's founding in 1889, were absorbed into the university in 1913 and the chair of ethnology was appointed to the director, who at that juncture was Professor Hans

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<sup>114</sup> *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 5 December 1916, Zentralarchiv, Zurich.

<sup>115</sup> Verena Münzer, "Das Völkerkundemuseum der Universität Zurich 1889-1989," *Geographica Helvetica* no. 3 (1989): 155.

J. Wehrli (1871-1945). Wehrli presented the entire collection simultaneously in an attempt to showcase a developmental history of human culture predicated on technological mastery. While Wehrli supplemented the permanent exhibition with small comparative rotating displays, the museum lacked a robust acquisitions budget and was thus primarily reliant on donations, which necessarily informed the subjects of the supplementary exhibitions.

In 1917, the university funded the creation of a reference library.<sup>116</sup> Though undated, Tzara's papers in the artist's archives at the Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet include reading lists of what he may have consulted there.<sup>117</sup> He cited influential texts such as Leo Frobenius's *Und Afrika Sprach* (1912), Henry Trilles's *Chez les Fang* (1912), as well as more specialized English language scholarship, including the Smithsonian Museum's *Bulletin* and Hollis's 1905 study of Masai communities in what is today Kenya.<sup>118</sup> He even identified specific objects reproduced in both the first (published 1906) and fifth (published 1911) issues of the Leipzig Museum für Völkerkunde research bulletin in his notebooks.<sup>119</sup> Unfortunately, I have as yet been unable to locate issues of the journal and thus cannot ascertain with certainty what objects he had identified as important.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Münzer, 155.

<sup>117</sup> Given that there are no titles published after 1920, I believe these lists can reasonably be dated to the period of time in which Tzara was living in Zurich and would have had ready access to the university and ethnographic museum libraries.

<sup>118</sup> TZR 567, 4 and TZR 567, 8; TZR 568, 35 and 33, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

<sup>119</sup> TZR 567, 4, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

<sup>120</sup> None of the volumes discussed by Blier in her hypothesis about potential sources for the artists living and working in Paris in the first two decades of the twentieth century are included in Tzara's lists.

Scholars have claimed that, in addition to the ethnographic museum's collections, Tzara would have had access to those of the educator, dealer, and dada patron Han Coray (1880-1974). Unfortunately, despite Coray's meticulous numbering system, there are no records of when he acquired specific objects. In 1931, when Coray was unable to pay off his numerous loans, the Schweizerische Volksbank seized his collection of more than 2,500 objects. Two years later the bank appointed Wehrli to catalogue and value the collection. Wehrli outsourced the former task to his student Elsy Leuzinger (who would eventually become the director of the Museum Rietberg), while he enlisted the dealers Charles Ratton and Ernst Ascher for assistance with the latter.<sup>121</sup> Leuzinger's notes contain no information about either the acquisition date or source, nor any contextual information about the objects.<sup>122</sup> Wehrli successfully purchased the entire collection from the Schweizerische Volksbank for the university shortly thereafter, parceling off portions of Coray's collections in resales to private individuals, including German-Swiss banker and Nazi party member Eduard von der Heydt, founder of the Rietberg Museum, as well as public institutions such as the Zurich Museum of Applied Arts and the Galerie Beaux-Arts.<sup>123</sup>

Francini and Oberhofer maintain that the address Coray gave in his 1966 conversation with his biographer Herbert Frank for the French dealer Paul Guillaume's

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<sup>121</sup> Alexis Malefakis, "The Fate of the Han Coray Collection and the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich," *Dada Africa: Dialogue with the Other*, ed. Ralf Burmesiter Michaela Oberhofer and Esther Tisa Francini (Zurich, Switzerland: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2016), 125.

<sup>122</sup> In October 2017, I consulted archival records for 75 objects in the University of Zurich's Ethnographic Museum collections. I'd like to extend my gratitude to Alexis Malefakis for facilitating my research.

<sup>123</sup> Malefakis, "The Fate of the Han Coray Collection and the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich," 126.

gallery – Rue de la Boétie – places his first encounter with African art in the year 1921.<sup>124</sup> However, Tzara exhibited a work on loan from Guillaume at the First Dada Exhibition in 1917 (Fig. 1.21), four years prior. Coray’s opening comment to the passage cited by the curators of the *Dada Africa* exhibition provides the key to resolving the issue. He attests that, “I only realized that the despised and tortured American Negroes were the descendants of a highly cultivated people when I first visited Paris.”<sup>125</sup> Ultimately, in my estimation, Coray connected Paris – and its large population of people of African descent – with his realization of the vastness of the African diaspora. Indeed, as George Kubler noted in 1977, Coray considered himself in competition with the collector Alfred C. Barnes, seeking to outbid his American counterpart as a bizarre form of comeuppance for the widely-recognized racism of the United States.<sup>126</sup> In any case, curator Alexis Malefakis has determined that Coray acquired the majority of his objects from the major European dealers during the 1920s – alongside Tzara. Thus, the dynamic between Coray and Tzara in the foundational months of dada can be understood as more collaborative than instructive, as others have claimed. Though outside the scope of this dissertation, the similarities between the contents of their collections substantiates my hypothesis. For the

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<sup>124</sup> Michaela Oberhofer and Esther Tisa Francini, “Han Coray between Dada and Africa: A Life for Art,” *Dada Africa: Dialogue with the Other*, ed. Ralf Burmesiter Michaela Oberhofer and Esther Tisa Francini (Zurich, Switzerland: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2016), 116.

<sup>125</sup> “Daß die verachteten und gequälten amerikanischen Neger die Nachkommen eines hochkultivierten Volkes waren, begriff ich erst bei meinem ersten Aufenthalt in Paris.” Herbert Frank, *Die unwahrscheinliche Geschichte des Han Coray* (Amsterdam: 1977), 243. Archives, Ethnographic Museum, University of Zurich.

<sup>126</sup> George Kubler, 247-250.

present, the role of the University's ethnographic collections in the development of dada remains lost to historians.<sup>127</sup>

### Plasticity v. Relief – Marcel Janco and West African Sculptural Models

Other members of the dada circle, principally Marcel Janco, maintained an interest in African sculpture as a source of inspiration, similarly to Picasso and his fauvist counterparts. Janco's *Construction 2* (Fig. 1.20), reproduced in the booklet for the First Dada Exhibition, blends mechanical and biomorphic forms that trouble artistic conventions. The image depicts an assemblage measuring about 75cm in height that Janco eventually destroyed.<sup>128</sup> A small hemisphere perches on the front right edge of the triangular base. A network of small balls connected by wires reminiscent of a model of an atom emerges from the sphere, acting as connective tissue to the triangular scrim-like structure that rises from the rear of the base. Janco's innovative constructions sought to criticize the conventions of sculptural representation. Janco would have availed himself of a variety of sources of images of African and Oceanic objects discussed above: the collections of the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich as well as *The Blue Rider* almanac, Paul Guillaume's 1917 *Sculptures nègres* and Carl Einstein's 1915 volume *Negerplastik*.

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<sup>127</sup> Tzara's biographer, Marius Hentea, has demonstrated that although Tzara obtained a student visa to enter Switzerland, he initially enrolled at a private institute run by Herr Hausmann in order to prepare for entrance exams at the University of Zurich. By 1917, however, that plan had been entirely abandoned as Tzara turned his attention to dada. See Marius Hentea, "At the Cabaret," *Tata Dada: The Real Life and Celestial Adventures of Tristan Tzara* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), 59-60.

<sup>128</sup> Marcel Janco interviewed by Seiwert. Cited by Michaela Oberhofer in "Marcel Janco's Masks and Designs," *Dada Africa: Dialogue with the Other*, eds. Ralf Burmeister, Michaela Oberhofer, Esther Tisa Francini (Zurich: Schidegger & Spiess, 2016), 32-33. Harry Seiwert, *Marcel Janco: Dadaist. Zeitgenosse. Wohltemperierter morgenländischer Konstruktivist*. Dissertation, University of Trier, 1993, page 558.

Beginning in 1911, Guillaume, along with his contemporaries Josef Brummer in France and Marius de Zayas in the United States, began organizing exhibitions and sales of primarily figurative sculpture, masks, and textiles from French and Belgian colonial territories in West and Central Africa, today the nations of Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, and Mali.<sup>129</sup> In 1917, the same year as the First Dada Exhibition opened in Zurich, Guillaume published the book *Sculptures nègres* in conjunction with an exhibition of the same title at his newly relaunched gallery in Paris.<sup>130</sup> The volume, of which sixty-three copies were printed, included an essay by the poet Guillaume Apollinaire, along with twenty-four photographic reproductions of works in Guillaume's private stock as well as those of artists such as Henri Matisse and those in the Musée d'ethnographie du Trocadéro – including the work sent to the exhibition at the Galerie Corray.<sup>131</sup> In his essay, Apollinaire emphasizes the alleged unbroken transmission of formal features animated by the assumed animistic religious meaning of African objects.<sup>132</sup> He maintains that the lack of information about these objects is the second, and equally important, source of their fascination for artists and collectors. Apollinaire concludes his remarks with the assertion that, “It is through great audacity in taste that we

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<sup>129</sup> Yaëlle Biro, “Chapitre III. Paris – New York: axes d'échange d'œuvres et d'idées,” *Fabriquer le regard: Marchands, réseaux et objets d'art africains à l'aube du XXe siècle* (Paris: Les Presses du réel, 2018), 176-276.

<sup>130</sup> Paul Guillaume, *Sculptures nègres* (Paris: Frazier-Soye, 1917). John Warne Monroe, “The Wings of Snobbery,” *Metropolitan Fetish: African Sculpture and the Imperial French Invention of Primitive Art* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019), 97-98.

<sup>131</sup> Apollinaire's essay had first been published in the April 1st edition of the *Mercur de France* under the title “Mélanoophilie or mélanomanie.” Reproduced in Guillaume Apollinaire, *Œuvres en prose complètes* 3, ed. Michel Décaudin (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 252-255.

<sup>132</sup> Guillaume Apollinaire, “Concerning the Art of the Blacks 1917,” *Primitivism and Twentieth Century Art: A Documentary History*, ed. Jack Flam and Miriam Deutch, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 107, 109.

have come to consider these Negro idols as real works of art,” ultimately emphasizing the perception of Europeans over the knowledge and skills of African makers.<sup>133</sup>

Another important work for Janco, Tzara, and the other Dadaists interested in questions of new media was critic Carl Einstein’s first major work, *Negerplastik*, published two years prior. The volume includes 119 black and white photographs of ninety-four sculptures accompanied by an introductory text divided into five sections. More than three-quarters of the images present a single uniform perspective on the three-dimensional objects, as part of Einstein’s aim to create a corpus where one was not previously extant.<sup>134</sup> As Z.S. Strother observes, the non-symbolic / non-referential nature of the fetish, which Einstein propounds in *Negerplastik*, was anachronistic in contemporary anthropological circles, yet it provided a foil for his theories on the work of art.<sup>135</sup> Einstein attributes the “cubic intuition of space” as unique to freestanding wooden objects from sub-Saharan Africa reproduced throughout the volume.<sup>136</sup> The “purity of African sculpture,” he claims, renders it alien to European eyes.<sup>137</sup> Ultimately, Einstein helped to establish the canon of so-called historical arts predicated on his perception of their shared formal characteristics.<sup>138</sup> Artists like Janco and Tzara understood works like

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<sup>133</sup> Apollinaire, “Concerning the Art of the Blacks 1917,” 109-110.

<sup>134</sup> Z.S. Strother, “Looking for Africa in Carl Einstein’s *Negerplastik*.” *African Arts* 46, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 8, 11.

<sup>135</sup> Strother, “Looking for Africa in Carl Einstein’s *Negerplastik*.” 15-16.

<sup>136</sup> Carl Einstein, “Ch. 4 Negro Sculpture,” *A Mythology of Forms: Selected Writings on Art*, trans. Charles Mark Haxthausen (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2019), page?.

<sup>137</sup> Einstein, “Ch. 4 Negro Sculpture,” page?.

<sup>138</sup> Hilary Whitham Sánchez, “Carl Einstein,” *Historic Index of Dealers and Collectors of Cubism*, The Leonard A. Lauder Research Center for Modern Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (December 2019) <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/libraries-and-research-centers/leonard-lauder-research-center/research/index-of-cubist-art-collectors/einstein>



the ones reproduced by Einstein in *Negerplastik* as inspirational for this very reason: they defied conventional European paradigms of representation.

Both Einstein and Apollinaire were responding to the theories of the German critic Adolf Hildebrand that shaped art historical discourses at the beginning of the twentieth century. In his 1893 book *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture* (*Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst*), Hildebrand identified relief as the central principle of art because it enables the viewer to maintain a dominant view of an object while unifying the foreground and backgrounds. He writes, “It is only when the figure, though in reality a solid, gains its effect as a plane picture, that it attains artistic form, that is to say, perfection for our sense of vision.”<sup>139</sup> In other words, artistic forms in which all features are visible from one point of view constitute true art for Hildebrand.

Hildebrand subscribed to a hierarchical model of aesthetic development predicated in Western European mores, dismissing non-white artists for what he identified as an inability to render the world in planar terms. He wrote, “A more highly developed consciousness is requisite in order to observe the visual appearance as a mere sense impression, separating it from its involuntary effect on ideas of form.”<sup>140</sup> No doubt Hildebrand would have objected strongly to Tzara’s inclusion of the wooden sculpture by an unidentified artist from what is today Côte d’Ivoire (Fig. 1.24). The object does not correspond to Hildebrand’s criteria: it is neither miniaturized nor monumental, nor does it cohere as a single pictorial viewpoint, but rather is rendered fully in the round.

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<sup>139</sup> Adolf Hildebrand, “V: The Conception of Relief,” *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, trans. Max Meyer and Robert Morris Odgen (New York: G.E. Stechert & Co., 1907), 96.

<sup>140</sup> Hildebrand, “V: The Conception of Relief,” 86.

The remainder of Tzara's description of African and Oceanic artworks in his 1917 article published in *SIC* cited above exemplifies the way in which both real and imagined qualities of African objects informed the dadaists' aesthetic theories. Tzara describes the process of the so-called primitive artist,

While working new relationships organize themselves according to the degree of necessity; this is how the expression of purity came into being. From blackness, let us extract light. Simple, rich luminous naiveté. Different materials, the scales of form. To construct in balanced hierarchy.<sup>141</sup>

While Tzara and Janco may not have understood the metaphysical systems that undergirded late nineteenth-century West African theories of aesthetic representation, they would have been able to observe the formal characteristics of objects such as the one Guillaume lent for the First Dada Exhibition.<sup>142</sup> Indeed, one of Janco's sculptures reproduced in the first issue of *Dada* exemplifies some aspects of Tzara's notion of the so-called primitive artistic product.

*Construction 3* (Fig. 1.25) is an assemblage of synthetically manufactured and natural materials: a triangular tent-like structure with a constellation of metal wires reminiscent of a weather vane rising from its apex perches on the sturdy wooden base. The fabric's contrasting colors – dark on the exterior and light on the interior – represent a reversal of the conventional associations of caves with darkness. A single triangular piece of dark paper hovers on the viewer's left, suspended in mid-air by a set of metallic wires and balls reminiscent of a molecular model. The curvilinear forms flowering from the tallest point in the fabric structure create a sense of upward and outward movement.

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<sup>141</sup> Tzara, "Note on negro art [1917]," 57-58.

<sup>142</sup> Susan Mullin Vogel, *Baule: African Art, Western Eyes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

The entirety of *Construction 3* seems held together in tension, exemplifying Tzara's "balanced hierarchy." Janco's abstract sculptures constructed of multiple media flouted Western aesthetic conventions prioritizing figurative linear representation. Furthermore, by exhibiting Janco's sculpture alongside the work by an unidentified Ivoirian artist lent by Guillaume for the First Dada Exhibition, Tzara contested the distinction between so-called fine and primitive or folk art. Similarly to the way in which Janco's intermedia sculptures represented his attempt to apply the principle of direct artistic expression projected onto African objects, so too did the textile works by Adya van Rees-Dutilh, Sophie Taeuber, and Jean Arp.

#### Textiles: Embroidering Abstract Artifacts

Tzara's curatorial choices for the First Dada Exhibition reinforce how the dadaists used material juxtapositions to disrupt traditional European aesthetic paradigms. In addition to Janco's intermedia objects and the wooden sculpture by an unidentified Ivoirian artist discussed above, Tzara selected embroidered artworks by van Rees-Dutilh, Taeuber, and Arp for the First Dada Exhibition, reproducing them in both the catalogue for the exhibition and later in *Dada*. While Sub-Saharan African textiles, from Kongo raffia textiles to Malian *bògòlanfini*, had been in circulation in Europe for several centuries, these three artists drew on medieval European textile manufacturing traditions for inspiration, exemplifying the ideological fungibility of so-called modernist primitivism.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Chris Spring, *African Textiles Today* (London, UK: The British Museum Press; Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, in association with British Museum Press, 2012).

More than thirty years after its publication, Rozsika Parker's *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* remains an essential analysis of textiles in Western Europe. Parker demonstrates that during the sixteenth century the medium increasingly became associated with upper class women. A new emphasis on individual gesture and effortlessness resulted in the division of artistic media along gendered lines, devaluing the collaborative and labor intensive art of embroidery by male-dominated guilds and ceding preference to painting and drawing.<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, shifting the fabrication of domestic fixtures and liturgical vestments to women enabled aristocratic men to maintain a role outside of public life while justifying a humanistic education encompassing history, literature, and painting for their female counterparts.<sup>145</sup> In the nineteenth century, notions of artistry collided with industrial mass production, ultimately strengthening divisions between the arts. Nevertheless, as Virginia Gardener Troy observes, "Textiles provided artists and theorists with the ideal medium, format, and process to engage with contemporary ideas regarding the role of the machine, the use of non-painterly expressions, and the blending of art and utility in the modern era."<sup>146</sup> In other words, textile production – much like so-called *arts nègres* – offered early-twentieth-century European artists unique opportunities to test solutions to modernist pictorial problems.<sup>147</sup>

Van Rees-Dutilh's *Composition in Silk* – now lost – consisted of multicolored shapes arranged in two large swirling patterns immediately adjacent to one another. The

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<sup>144</sup> Rozsika Parker, "The Domestication of Embroidery," *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: The Women's Press Limited, 1984), 80-81.

<sup>145</sup> Parker, "The Domestication of Embroidery," 75.

<sup>146</sup> Virginia Gardner Troy, "Introduction," *The Modernist Textile: Europe and America, 1890-1940* (Hampshire, UK and Burlington, VT: Humphries Lund, 2006), 15.

<sup>147</sup> Troy, "Introduction," 14.

abstract forms conjure a stark landscape of defoliated trees beneath a summer sun or moonlit sky. Even in the relatively poor-quality reproduction (Fig. 1.17) one gets a sense for not only the smooth texture of the ripples of embroidered silk but also its sheen, exemplary of the artist's technical facility with the medium. Van Rees-Dutilh began her career in her home country of the Netherlands as a painter and illustrator, turning to embroidery in 1906 following the birth of her first child.<sup>148</sup> Like her Swiss colleague Sophie Taeuber, van Rees-Dutilh executed her own designs as well as those of others. While scholars have yet to determine if van Rees-Dutilh's preference for embroidery was a practical response to the exigencies necessitated by motherhood or a feminist turn to a previously devalued medium, undoubtedly her work participates in the complex dynamics of class and gender at play in the development of artistic hierarchies unearthed by Parker and Troy.

*Pathetic Symmetry* (Fig. 1.18) raises related but distinct questions around the issue of authorship as well as the role of abstraction within the development of dada. Attributed to both Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber, the large-scale embroidery consists of a kaleidoscopic arrangement of asymmetrical shapes in primarily earth tones punctuated with red, yellow, olive green, and pink. The catalogue identifies Taeuber, trained at the prestigious Debschitz School for Fine and Applied Art in Munich and a faculty member at Zurich's School of Applied Arts, as the "executor" of the artwork, emphasizing her

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<sup>148</sup> Marida Vermeulen, "Adriana Catharina Dutilh," Online Dictionary of Dutch Women Artists, Huygens ING <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/vrouwenlexicon/lemmata/data/dutilh>; adapted from Marloes Huiskamp's entry in *Digital Women's Lexicon of the Netherlands*.

technical skills.<sup>149</sup> In contrast, Arp's name appears without further specification, reinforcing and totalizing his claims to authorship predicated on his role as the designer. Without the explicit reference to its medium in the catalogue description – *broderie* or embroidery in French – *Pathetic Symmetry* could be and indeed shares many characteristics with a painting. Tzara's presentation of Arp and Taeuber's work in the brochure produced to commemorate the First Dada Exhibition thus simultaneously undermines and reinforces its connections to the production of small-scale fabric objects by individual women discussed by Parker.

Taeuber's formal artistic training was rooted in the understanding of indigenous European traditions as pure and direct, as discussed by Tzara the same year as the First Dada Exhibition. Taeuber began her training at the School of Applied Arts in Munich founded by Hermann Obrist. Obrist (1863-1927) studied at Académie Julien in Paris and trained in embroidery in Italy alongside colleague Berthe Ruchet, and they set up a studio together in Munich from 1894 to 1900.<sup>150</sup> In 1902, Obrist founded another school with painter Wilhelm von Debschitz predicated on the pedagogy of a dual education in design and three-dimensional crafts that would function as an initial model for the Bauhaus.<sup>151</sup> Obrist encouraged students not to copy forms of so-called primitive art but rather to emulate the direct natural forms of artistic expression believed to be their purview, emphasizing the abstraction of rhythmic and linear patterns in nature.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Bibiana Obler, "Taeuber, Arp, and the Politics of Cross-Stitch," *The Art Bulletin* 91: no. 2 (June 2009): 215.

<sup>150</sup> Virginia Gardner Troy, "Chapter One: The New Art, 1890-1905," *The Modernist Textile: Europe and America, 1890-1940* (Hampshire, UK and Burlington, VT: Humphries Lund, 2006), 28.

<sup>151</sup> Troy, "Chapter One: The New Art, 1890-1905," 30.

<sup>152</sup> Troy, "Chapter One: The New Art, 1890-1905," 65.

Obrist coined the term *Peitschenhieb* or whiplash to refer to an Art Nouveau panel produced in 1895 in stylized vegetal motifs.<sup>153</sup> As Deborah Silverman has demonstrated, the “whiplash” style utilized raw materials, particularly ivory, in stylistically innovative ways, mimicking the movement of the rubber vines and the *chicotte*, the long knotted whip with a wooden handle now infamously linked to the regime’s genocidal policies, to further entrance the public with Belgian imperialism in what is today the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>154</sup> Although Arp and Taeuber’s *Pathetic Symmetry* bears no direct formal connection to Art Nouveau, it is important to consider how the colonial context impacted her approach to thinking about art and specifically abstraction as an adaptation of natural forms.

Arp’s *Diagonal Composition – Crucifixion* – also selected by Tzara for the exhibition at the Galerie Corray –demonstrates another type of engagement with the formal and social valences of woven artworks at the beginning of the twentieth century. From the middle ages, European tapestry was a prestigious, monumental, and pictorial art form practiced by skilled male technicians in large workshops.<sup>155</sup> The term tapestry designates figurative weft-faced textiles woven by hand on a loom, typically with a flat, plain weave.<sup>156</sup> The warps are arranged so there is a small space between the even and odd warps, called the shed, through which the weaver passes the colored weft threads that

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<sup>153</sup> Troy, “Chapter One: The New Art, 1890-1905,” 28.

<sup>154</sup> Deborah Silverman, “Art Nouveau, Art of Darkness: Lineages of Belgian Modernism, Part I,” *West 86<sup>th</sup>* 18: no. 2 (Fall-Winter 2011): 163-170.

<sup>155</sup> K.L.H. Wells, “Introduction,” *Weaving Modernism: Postwar Tapestry Between Paris and New York* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 4.

<sup>156</sup> Wells, “Introduction,” 5.

are wrapped around a handheld shuttle; by passing the weft back and forth through the two sheds, the design gradually emerges.<sup>157</sup>

While Obler maintains that Arp's design did not fully leverage tapestry's unique qualities of manufacture, I maintain that the application of an abstract compositional style was of greater importance to the artist.<sup>158</sup> In the early twentieth century, the term tapestry functioned as an ideological catchall for a decorative woven work of art; however, unlike other weaving forms, tapestry, like painting, always implied the presence of the wall for its support.<sup>159</sup> Additionally, its historical association with royal courts and manufacture by male-only guilds furthered its prestige among textile arts. *Diagonal Composition – Crucifixion* thus simultaneously engaged with and undermined this history, rendering a biblical theme in abstracted planes of color and reduced scale.

Arp's choice to work in tapestry can be further tied to his desire to make art with a direct and immediate connection to reality. In the pamphlet produced in conjunction with his exhibition at Tanner Galerie in 1915, Arp explicitly connected his hostility to perspectival painting to the search for new forms and models found among so-called *arts nègres* and the Gothic.<sup>160</sup> Indeed, Arp may have been familiar with architect and critic

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<sup>157</sup> Thomas P. Campbell, "How Medieval and Renaissance Tapestries Were Made," *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, February 2008)

[http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/tapm/hd\\_tapm.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/tapm/hd_tapm.htm)

<sup>158</sup> Obler, "Taeuber, Arp, and the Politics of Cross-Stitch," 215.

<sup>159</sup> Wells, "Introduction," 5.

<sup>160</sup> Jean Arp, "*Moderne Wandteppiche, Stickereien, Malereien, Zeichnungen*," *Jean Arp, 1886-1966*, trans. Jane Hancock (Minneapolis Institute of Art, 1987).



Gottfried Semper's theory of tapestry as a transitional object between early humans' use of tents and contemporary European architecture.<sup>161</sup>

Obler speculates that Arp hired a professional weaver to execute his design for *Diagonal Composition – Crucifixion*.<sup>162</sup> As Wells notes, this weaver most likely worked for the Manufacture de Beauvais, which specialized in tapestry panels for furniture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, though this hypothesis has yet to be confirmed.<sup>163</sup> However, by attributing the object to himself as the designer, rather than to the person directly responsible for its manufacture, Arp designated artistic conception as the primary locus for authorship.<sup>164</sup> In 1920, writing collectively under the pseudonym "Partens," Tzara and Arp along with Walter Serner, described a process whereby an artist could order his artworks over the phone.<sup>165</sup> As Anne Umland notes, this aspect of dada served the dual purpose of troubling the boundaries between fine art and utilitarian objects as well as notions of individual authorship.<sup>166</sup>

For example, Sonia Delauney-Terk's 1909 *Broderie de Feuillage* marked the move away from veristic representations in tapestry-style textiles towards abstract designs. Delauney-Terk aspired to achieve simultaneous contrasts of multi-media colors

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<sup>161</sup> Gottfried Semper, *Die vier Elemente der Baukunst*, Dresden, 1851. For English translation see "The Basic Elements of Architecture," *Gottfried Semper: In Search of Architecture*, ed. Wolfgang Herrmann (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984), 196-203.

<sup>162</sup> Obler, "Taeuber, Arp, and the Politics of Cross-Stitch," 211.

<sup>163</sup> Wells, "Introduction," 4.

<sup>164</sup> In this regard, *Diagonal Composition – Crucifixion* differs from the first dada "readymades," *Bicycle Wheel* and *Bottlerack*, of the year prior. Marcel Duchamp's term marks an important distinction between his work and Arp's, namely the difference between the appropriation of industrially produced objects by the artist and the practice of commissioning artworks from skilled technicians. *Art Since 1900*, 128-9

<sup>165</sup> Alexander Partens, "Dada Art (1920)," *The Dada Almanac*, trans. Malcolm Green (London: Atlas Press, 1993), 95-96. An excerpt from this essay was reproduced in Anne Umland, "Jean (Hans) Arp, Enak's Tear, 1917," *Dada in the Collection*, Studies in Modern Art 9, ed. Anne Umland and Adrian Sudhalter with Scott Gerson (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 55.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

in these works, as in her paintings. The dynamic color relationships exploited by Delauney-Terk were derived in part from Eugène Chevreul's 1839 book *Law of Simultaneous Contrast of Colors* written while he was the head of Gobelin tapestry manufacture.<sup>167</sup> These works were exhibited in 1913 at the first autumn salon at Der Sturm, and perhaps Arp, Van Rees, and Van Rees-Dutilh would have been familiar with them through their connections in both Berlin and Paris.

Arp's consistent efforts to shift the locus of artistic authority away from those with technical skill, namely the unidentified Beauvais manufacturer and his future spouse respectively, parallels modernists' use of African works to further their aims. Performance artist Coco Fusco identifies this phenomenon in her essay reflecting on her performance "Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit..." with Guillermo Gomez-Pena that traveled internationally for the Edge '92 biennial. Discussing Tzara's essay on so-called *arts nègres* and his transliterations of aboriginal poems, she observes that,

In the case of Tzara, his perception of the 'primitive artist' as part of his metaphorical family conveniently recasts his own colonial relation to his imaginary 'primitive' as one of kinship. In this context, the threatening reminder of difference is that original body, or that physical and visual presence of the cultural other, must therefore be fetishized, silenced, subjugated, or otherwise controlled to be 'appreciated.' The significance of that violent erasure is diminished – it is the 'true' avant-garde artist who becomes a better version of the 'primitive,' a hybrid or cultural transvestite.<sup>168</sup>

European modernists' fascination with African and Oceanic cultural forms – whether physical objects like sculpture or ephemeral artworks such as songs – necessitated a psychological dissociation from the exploitative power dynamics inherent to the colonial

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<sup>167</sup> Troy, "Chapter One: The New Art, 1890-1905," 67.

<sup>168</sup> Coco Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," *Tulane Drama Review* 38, no. 1 (1994).

socio-economic system that facilitated their access to those forms. Fusco's use of the term transvestite is particularly – though perhaps unintentionally – apt given the gendered dynamics associated with the textile objects manufactured by Zurich circle. By separating the product from the producer, artists like Tzara and Arp maintained their (self-appointed) positions of creative authority. Indeed, one of the central failures of dada is the way in which the group's activities reinforced the hierarchical systems they sought to critique. However, as discussed further below, Tzara's position within the global imperial matrix was not as straightforward as Fusco suggests.

#### Other-ing Chords: Sounds and Dada

The dadaists' interest in new art forms extended beyond the manufacture of objects in nontraditional media such as van Rees-Dutilh's textiles and Janco's assemblages to their notorious performances.<sup>169</sup> As discussed above, in *Flight Out of Time* Ball described the components of the first evening performance at the Cabaret Voltaire as comprising both visual and performance art. By the following month, in his entry dated 2 March, Ball placed increasing emphasis on the performances, and specifically the recitation of poetry. He stated that,

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<sup>169</sup> To date, analyses of the early dada performances lack specificity. Maurer's analysis jumps from Janco's 1917 masks to Hannah Höch's collages nearly a decade later without delimiting any connection between their media or processes. Maurer's generalizations were rehearsed yet again in *Dada Africa*: contributions by Hélène Thiérard, Michaela Oberhofer and Mona de Weerdts failed to accurately contextualize European artists' engagement with ethnographic literature as they buttressed the dadaists' own concerns during the colonial period. Evan Maurer, "Dada and Surrealism," in *'Primitivism' in Twentieth-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, Vol. II (New York, NY: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 535-541. Hélène Thiérard, "Negro poem? Sound poem? Everyone His Own Other"; Michaela Oberhofer, "'Our Belief in a Direct, Magical, Organic and Creative Art,' Marcel Janco's Masks and Designs"; and Mona de Weerdts, "'Abstract' and 'Cubist' Dances. Becoming Involved with the Culturally Foreign in order to Establish a New Performance Aesthetic," *Dada Africa: Dialogue with the Other*, ed. Ralf Burmeister, Michaela Oberhofer, and Esther Tisa Francini. (Zurich: Scheidegger & Spies for Museum Rietberg and Berlinische Galerie, 2017), 22-42.

Reciting aloud has become the touchstone of the quality of a poem for me, and I have learned (from the stage) to what extent today's literature is worked out as a problem at the desk and is made for the spectacles of the collector instead of for the ears of living human beings.<sup>170</sup>

Ball's concept of *Lautgedicht*, set out in his diary a few months later in June of 1916, emphasized the role of phonetics, identifying the gap between sounds and words as the space unique to poetry.<sup>171</sup> The blurring of sound and meaning through repetition, cutting, and reassembling – a process of aural collage – characterized Tzara's interventions in these years.

The first performance of Tzara's simultaneous poem "The Admiral Is Looking for a House to Rent" at the Cabaret Voltaire on March 30, 1916 can be understood as an instantiation of Ball's theoretical musings.<sup>172</sup> Utilizing their voices as instruments, Huelsenbeck, Janco, and Tzara read the same poem aloud at the same time in multiple languages: German, French, and English, respectively. The words, overlapping one another, rendered the meaning of each phrase unintelligible to the listener, weaving an abstract aural tapestry. Indeed, Ball presented the poem in a double-page spread of *Cabaret Voltaire* – the precursor to *Dada* – in a manner analogous to a musical score, as T. J. Demos observes.<sup>173</sup> The typography closely parallels the two Futurist contributions to the issue – the double-paged poem "title" by Marinetti and "Varo del Trento" by Francesco Cangiullo – further underscoring the way in which Tzara and his contemporaries were responding to and parodying other avant-garde movements.

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<sup>170</sup> See passage quoted in the introduction from Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*, 54.

<sup>171</sup> Tobias Wilke, "Da-da: "Articulatory Gestures" and the Emergence of Sound Poetry," *MLN* 128: 3 (2013): 639-668. <https://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed April 4, 2017).

<sup>172</sup> Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*, 57.

<sup>173</sup> T.J. Demos, "Zurich Dada: The Aesthetics of Exile," *The Dada Seminars*, ed. Leah Dickerman (Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, 2005), 13.

While David Gascoigne draws a distinction between the futurists' embrace of technological innovation and the dadaists' so-called primitivism, the futurists' stress on new media also indubitably influenced Tzara and the group first assembled at the Cabaret Voltaire.<sup>174</sup> Scholars have focused on Tzara's direct citation of the futurist movement in his manifesto and the role of Marinetti's *parole in libertà* in the dadaists' use of typography in their publications.<sup>175</sup> In addition, Fortunato Depero and Giacomo Balla's *Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe*, published as a leaflet on March 11, 1915 may have inspired the combative tactics of the group's performances.

In *Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe (Ricostruzione futurista dell'universo)*, Balla and Depero called for the creation of new kinds of joyful objects using all materials in order to assault the senses. They assert, "We shall find abstract equivalents for all the forms and elements of the universe, then combine them together according to the whims of our inspiration in order to create plastic complexes that we will put into motion."<sup>176</sup> Listing everything from wool and silk to celluloid and colored glass as suitable artistic media, Balla and Depero advocated a form of art that was not only abstract but mobile, noisy, and subject to processes of generation and disintegration.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> David Gascoigne, "Boomboom and Hullabaloo: Rhythm in the Zurich Dada Revolution," *Paragraph* 33:2 (2010): 197-214.

<sup>175</sup> "The futurist sees the same cup in movement, a succession of objects side by side, mischievously embellished by a few guide-lines. This doesn't stop the canvas being either a good or bad painting destined to form an investment for intellectual capital." Tristan Tzara, "Dada Manifesto 1918," in *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampisteries*, trans. Barbara Wright (Surrey, UK: Alma Classics, 2011), 6. Jeffrey Schnapp, "Politics and Poetics in Marinetti's Zang Tumb Tuuum," *Stanford Italian Review* (Spring 1985): 75-92.

<sup>176</sup> Giacomo Balla and Fortunato Depero, "Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe," *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman, trans. Lawrence Rainey (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 209.

<sup>177</sup> Balla and Depero, "Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe," 210-211.

Another previously overlooked European source that may have informed Tzara's approach to dadaist performance is L. Sabaneiev's essay "Scriabin's 'Prometheus'," reproduced in Kandinsky and Marc's *The Blue Rider Almanac*, discussed in part above. In his essay, Sabaneiev describes Russian composer Alexander Scriabin's symphony "Prometheus" as not merely music but rather a "mystical-religious art."<sup>178</sup> For Sabaneiev, "Prometheus" is akin to contemporary church services, themselves descendants of classic mystical ritual; he identifies "music, word, and plastic movement" as the most viable means of achieving ecstasy through union.<sup>179</sup> The objects selected for reproduction in his essay allude to Sabaneiev's definition of so-called plastic movement, juxtaposing two contemporary relief sculptures from the Kingdom of Benin and Germany, each depicting a soldier. Further, Sabaneiev reiterates Scriabin's belief that music is inseparable from harmonies of color; indeed, Scriabin conceived "Prometheus" as a multisensory experience and wrote an accompanying lighting schema for the work.<sup>180</sup> Ultimately, for Sabaneiev, Scriabin's use of consonant chords in "Prometheus" enabled the composer to run five or six different themes played simultaneously – an observation that indubitably informed Tzara's development of the simultaneous poem.<sup>181</sup>

"The Admiral is Looking for a House to Rent," with its deployment of multiple cadences predicated on the formal characteristics of speech in each language, can be understood as engaging with issues of new media not solely in response to futurist and expressionist precedents and Ball's notion of *Lautgedichte*, but also to the field of

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<sup>178</sup> Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, *Der Blaue Reiter Almanach* (1912), 127.

<sup>179</sup> Kandinsky and Marc, *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac*, 131.

<sup>180</sup> Realized in 2010 at Yale University. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3B7uQ5K0IU>

<sup>181</sup> Kandinsky and Marc, *Der Blaue Reiter Almanach*, 135.

ethnography. The first simultaneous poem was followed by so-called “chantes nègres.”

As Ball recounts in *Flight Out of Time*,

The simultaneous poem is followed by ‘Chant nègre I and II,’ both for the first time. ‘Chante nègre (or funèbre) No. 1’ was especially prepared and was performed as if in a Vehmic court in black cowls and with big and small exotic drums. The melodies for ‘Chant nègre II’ were composed by our esteemed host, Mr. Jan Ephraim, who had been involved with African business for some time a while ago, and he was helping eagerly with the performance like an instructive and stimulating prima donna.<sup>182</sup>

Jan Ephraim’s time as a merchant in sub-Saharan Africa marks him as the only member of dadaist circle of immediate friends to have visited the continent. It is unsurprising, however, that the group did not place more emphasis on his authority, given that their primary intellectual occupation was synthesizing and innovating a new art form. The dadaists’ inconsistent interest in firsthand information about African cultures reflects the central place of the ethical conundrum posed by European artists’ appropriation of both ephemeral and durable non-Western forms during the colonial period.

Tzara adapted his poem “Toto Waka” from the fourth edition of Karl Bücher’s *Arbeit und Rhythmus* published in 1909. European ethnographers visiting what is today New Zealand believed that the piece, alternatively spelled as Tukiwaka, was performed during the transportation of tree trunks utilized in canoe construction among Maori communities at the turn of the twentieth century. Christian Kaufmann speculates that Tzara would have been intrigued by the possibilities for rhythmic improvisation posed by the group’s response to the terrain over which they were hauling the heavy trunk.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*, 57-58.

<sup>183</sup> Christian Kaufmann, “Dada Reads Ethnological Sources: From Knowledge of Foreign Art Worlds to Poetic Understanding,” *Dada Africa: Dialogue with the Other*, ed. Ralf Burmeister, Michaela Oberhofer and Esther Tisa Francini (Zurich, Switzerland: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2016), 100.

Tzara printed two of his French translations of German ethnographic texts, “Song of the Serpent” and another untitled song – both also adapted from works in Bücher’s book – in the second issue of *Dada*. The straightforward typography belies Tzara’s awareness of, and indeed fascination with, the complexities of poetic translation in and beyond the ethnographic context. As Jean-Claude Blachère’s research demonstrates, Tzara’s “negro-phonetic” poems were predicated first on a transliteration and, secondly, on a series of translations across both media and languages.<sup>184</sup> Indeed, Ball’s presentation of “The Admiral is Looking for a House to Rent” in *Cabaret Voltaire* can be understood as an innovative approach to showcasing Tzara’s interest in the possibilities and problems associated with translating music and poetry across languages and into print.

### Deflected Marginality

African and Oceanic sculpture and performance may have appealed to Tzara not only for their formal qualities and openness to interpretation, but also because they were evidence of the power of cultural alterity broadly defined. Indeed, Tzara’s position within the French imperial matrix was not as straightforward as Fusco’s assessment discussed above implies, and thus his engagement with art forms from Africa and the Pacific islands must be differentiated from his counterparts.

As Marius Hentea observes in his 2015 biography of the artist, *TATA DADA: The Real Life and Celestial Adventures of Tristan Tzara*, Tzara’s relationship to his country of

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<sup>184</sup> Jean-Claude Blachère, “L’Evolution des conceptions primitivistes de Tristan Tzara,” *Le Modèle nègre* (Dakar: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1981), 117 – 178.



origin and his religion was ambivalent.<sup>185</sup> Despite his father's rejection of Judaism, the Romanian government's equation of religious heritage with ethnicity led to Tzara and his family's disenfranchisement. As non-citizens, Tzara and his family had no legal protection from the anti-Semitic prejudice rampant across Europe during the final decades of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth; furthermore, they were denied access to a variety of public resources, most notably those of education. Secular bourgeois Jews, such as the Rosenstocks, thus had very limited support networks, having divorced themselves from observant - and largely Zionist - Jews, and not having been accepted among Romanian Christians.

Sent away to the nearest private school, in Tzara's first year away from home at the age of nine he witnessed one of the most traumatic events in Romanian history: the peasant revolt that resulted in the deaths of nearly 10,000 people, reflecting the deep divide between rural and urban populations as well as Gentiles and Jews.<sup>186</sup> The anti-Semitic violence and concomitant political instability resulted in his being sent to Bucharest, which was considered safer. Tzara's time there was bookended by another tragedy: the imminent aerial bombardment of the capital as a result of the First World War. Furthermore, Tzara's relocation to Zurich in 1916 was primarily the result of a conflict with a bigoted professor at the university, as well as his involvement with the publication *Simbolul* that was targeted by local authorities as anti-nationalist owing to its French influences.

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<sup>185</sup> Marius Hentea, "'Come With Me to the Countryside': 1896-1906," *TATA DADA: The Real Life and Celestial Adventures of Tristan Tzara* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), 1-18.

<sup>186</sup> Marius Hentea, "The Education of Samuel Rosenstock: 1906-1912," *TATA DADA: The Real Life and Celestial Adventures of Tristan Tzara* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), 19-40.

Attention to and assignation of Tzara's racial and/or ethnic difference was a continuous part of his time in Zurich, marked notably by the passage in Hugo Ball's account, *Flight Out of Time*, describing the fateful opening night of the Cabaret Voltaire on February 5, 1916,

At about six in the evening, while we were still busy hammering and putting up futuristic posters, an Oriental-looking deputation of four little men arrived, with portfolios and pictures under their arms; repeatedly they bowed politely. They introduced themselves: Marcel Janco the painter, Tristan Tzara, Georges Janco, and a fourth gentleman whose name I did not quite catch. Arp happened to be there also, and we were able to communicate without too many words. Soon Janco's Arcangels was hanging with the other beautiful objects, and on that same evening Tzara read some traditional-style poems, which he fished out of his various coat pockets in a rather charming way.<sup>187</sup>

Ball's anti-Semitism is well-documented – he even underwent plastic surgery on his nose to avoid being mistaken for someone of Ashkenazi Jewish descent. The bigotry of Ball's description is underlined knowing that Tzara not only spoke German but also English, French, Romanian, and Spanish – Arp would have been utterly superfluous as a translator. The singularity of this performance – the only time that Tzara performed his poetry in his native language – its reception, and the rapid development of Tzara's interest in so-called *arts nègres* almost immediately following it necessitates further scrutiny.<sup>188</sup>

While Tzara could have been playing up his foreignness, the polylingual audience suggests otherwise: Ball's designation of Tzara's person and his poetry as “oriental” was

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<sup>187</sup> Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*, 52.

<sup>188</sup> Hentea believes that Tzara recited poems in Romanian during his first performance at the Cabaret Voltaire. He notably refused to write or converse in Romanian except with his family. Even during professional visits to his former home, he chose to speak in French. However, another possibility remains open, namely that Ball's notion of “traditional” poetry referred to Symbolist style, not language.

presumably neither anticipated nor appreciated. In contrast to Ball's misreading of Tzara, Richard Huelsenbeck's maniacal "*nègre*" drumming performances were legible as constructions. Returning to Coco Fusco's comments on the complexities of performing alterity illuminates Tzara's double-bind. She observes that, "What may be 'liberating' or 'transgressive' identification for Europeans and Euro-Americans is already a symbol of entrapment within an imposed stereotype for Others."<sup>189</sup> One avenue afforded Tzara to shed these types of dismissive characterizations was deflection, and *arts nègres* were the vehicle.

As Corina Jordache-Martin observes, Tzara repeatedly chose to de-emphasize his origins throughout his life, which fits a pattern of self-reinvention through participation in the world of art and entertainment open to European Jews.<sup>190</sup> Yet Jordache-Martin and other literary scholars such as Laura Ceia-Minjares have not addressed the role of Tzara's collecting of non-Western objects in this process of identity transformation. Tzara's perhaps unconscious use of African cultural forms to direct attention away from his own alterity reflects his unique position as what Ghassan Hage terms a "mis-interpellated" modern colonial subject.<sup>191</sup>

Hage's framework is useful for understanding the way in which Tzara's experiences informed his response to the African objects circulating in avant-garde circles, most notably in the ethnographic and artist publications and on display at the University of Zurich. This performance of what I term "deflected marginality," enabled

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<sup>189</sup> Coco Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," *Tulane Drama Review* 38, no. 1 (1994).

<sup>190</sup> Corina Jordache-Martin, "'Le venu de Zurich' or Tristan Tzara and the Insolence of the Margin," *Centennial Review* 42: no. 3 (Fall 1998): 569.

<sup>191</sup> Ghassan Hage, "The Affective Politics of Racial Mis-Interpellation," *Theory, Culture and Society* 27: no. 7-8 (January 2011): 113.

Tzara to both buy into and reject the Eurocentric values underpinning modernist aesthetics. His 1918 manifesto affirms this ambivalence repeatedly: “I am writing a manifesto and there’s nothing I want, and yet I’m saying certain things, and in principle I am against manifestos, as I am against principles [...]”<sup>192</sup> In contrast to his use of others’ poetry in his early Zurich performances, by 1921 Tzara was deliberately deploying the signs by which he earned Ball’s pejorative descriptors to criticize the intertwined anti-Semitism and white supremacy of European culture and his so-called avant-garde colleagues.

#### Bricolage: Papier Collé as Dada’s Meta-Text

Tzara’s absorption of contemporaneous non-dada artworks and techniques in exhibitions, performances, and publications to present his vision of the movement evokes what anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss termed a bricolage, or recombinatory, approach.<sup>193</sup> Tzara’s poetry in *Chronique Zurichoise*, his retrospective glance and would-be authoritative history from the vantage point of Paris, first published in *Dada Almanac* in 1920, demonstrates his self-conscious absorption of a variety of artistic forms into dada.<sup>194</sup> He described the first dada soirée,

Resumption of boxing: Cubist dance costumes of Janco, each with his bass drum on his head, noises, *nègre* music / trabatgea bonooooooooooooooooo /

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<sup>192</sup> Tzara, “Dada Manifesto (1918),” 3.

<sup>193</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée sauvage*. Paris: Librarie Plon, 1962; translated into English by Weidenfeld & Nicolson (London) in 1966.

<sup>194</sup> Tristan Tzara, “Chronique Zurichoise,” *Dada Almanac* (Paris: 1920): 10-28. Available on International Dada Archives, University of Iowa. See Malcolm Green for the English translation, *The Dada Almanac*, ed. Richard Huelsenbeck, trans. Malcolm Green (London: Atlas Press, 1993).

5 literary experiences: Tzara in tailcoat explains in front of the curtain, sober dry for the animals, the new aesthetic.<sup>195</sup>

The entry, dated 14 July 1916, encapsulates his conception of the shared vectors between African material and performance cultures, cubism, and dada.

As John Elderfield notes in the introductory remarks for his translation of *Flight Out of Time*, newspapers reviewing the exhibitions of January and February of 1917 at Galerie Corray referred to the Dadaists as “Zurich cubists.”<sup>196</sup> Already familiar with cubism and expressionism, the term “dada” thus functioned as an umbrella under which recent innovative artistic movements could be absorbed and subsequently transformed. Tzara’s concluded his remarks on his recollection of the first simultaneous poem, performed on 26 February 1916 at the Cabaret Voltaire, by invoking cubism. He writes, “Grande soirée – poème simultané 3 langues, protestation bruit musique nègre / [...] dernier cri, chanson Tzara danse protestations – projetée sur la danse cubiste en grelots.”<sup>197</sup> Translated as “projected on cubist dance in bells,” Tzara connects the sonorous capacities of dada performance to the fracturing and recombination of the image in cubist painting and collage.

But how did Tzara understand cubism at this juncture? In his “Dada Manifesto,” Tzara offered a description of the cubist method of seeing:

Cubism was born out of a simple way of looking at objects: Cezanne painted a cup twenty centimeters lower than his eyes, the cubists look at it from above, others complicate its appearance by cutting a vertical section through it and soberly placing it on one side. (I am not forgetting the

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<sup>195</sup> “Reprise du boxe: Danse cubiste costumes de Janco, chacun sa grosse caisse sur la tête, bruits, musique nègre / tratatgea bonoooooooooooooooo / 5 expériences littéraires: Tzara en frac explique devant le rideau, sec sobre pour les animaux, la nouvelle esthétique.” Tzara, “Chronique Zurichoise,” 325.

<sup>196</sup> Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*, 100.

<sup>197</sup> Tzara, “Chronique Zurichoise,” 324.

creators, nor the seminal reasons of unformed matter that they rendered definitive.)<sup>198</sup>

While Tzara's comments do not provide us with any explicit insights into how he understood cubism in relationship to dada, his emphasis on the perspective represented in the image signals how he sought to differentiate cubist painting from other European artistic styles.<sup>199</sup> In Tzara's formulation, cubism renders the world in opposing configurations, further reinforcing the fundamentally fragmented and limited nature of human vision, analogized via the painted and pasted paper tableaux.

Cosana Eram mobilizes Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopia to understand Tzara's approach to reassembling African and Oceanic poems collected by anthropologists in collage-like structures.<sup>200</sup> He maintains,

Through his idiosyncratic translation he assembled codes prone to critical and creative recombination. He used non-European sources in order to construct linguistically non-hierarchical intersections between Western and non-European worlds, cultures, and ideologies.<sup>201</sup>

While Eram claims that Tzara was not asserting his own authority, he did publish the works under his own name and performed them repeatedly in public, suggesting some form of ownership.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Tzara, "Dada Manifesto," 6.

<sup>199</sup> In a letter to André Breton dated 21 September 1919, Tzara situated dada as explicitly antithetical to both cubism and futurism. He wrote, "I proposed the word Dada for the title of a journal three years ago. This took place in Zurich with some friends who felt they had nothing in common with futurism and cubism. In the course of campaigns against every dogmatism, and ironically toward the creation of literary schools, Dada became the 'Dada movement.'" However, Tzara's life-long interest in cubism suggests that its possibilities ultimately outweighed its limitations as one of the dominant artistic movements at that juncture. See

<sup>200</sup> Cosana Eram, "Lost in Translation," *Dada/Surrealism* no. 20 (2015): 8-9.

<sup>201</sup> Eram, "Lost in Translation," 22-23.

<sup>202</sup> Eram, "Lost in Translation," 10. Eram's attempts to connect Tzara to an undifferentiated international primitive culture are both intellectually and ethically dubious, failing to account for the material conditions of colonialism and anti-Semitism with any historical specificity. His claim that Tzara's "self-conscious

## Dada Masks – Beyond the Cabaret Voltaire

Tzara's brief essay on the mask sculptures of the American artist Hilaire Hiler (1898-1966) in the July 1924 issue of *Vanity Fair* (Fig. 1.26) points to the longevity of the synergies dating back almost a decade to the foundational moments of dada in Zurich.<sup>203</sup> Hiler trained as a painter at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, relocating to Paris in 1919 and supporting himself as a jazz musician until his return to the West Coast of the United States in 1934.<sup>204</sup> With a doctorate in psychology, Hiler's most notable achievements are his studies of how color and the human psyche interact, exemplified in his design for the 1936 "The Prismarium" in the Maritime Museum as part of the Works Progress Administration and his 1945 manifesto *Why Abstract?*<sup>205</sup>

In his article, Tzara connects Hiler's masks to West African material and performance cultures, European theatrical traditions, and the cubist innovation of collage. Tzara maintains that masks enable humans to project a persona that exceeds their everyday one, and cites a variety of comparative examples for Hiler's masks.<sup>206</sup> He claims that, "The Greeks used masks with expressive grins or grimaces to express tragedy or comedy; the Middle Ages left us interesting documents on grotesque false-faces; while

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performances unrestrained by social norms resemble the black minstrel shows at the turn of the 20th century" seems particularly uncritical and indeed problematic. Eram, "Lost in Translation," 12.

<sup>203</sup> While I have as yet been unable to locate Hiler's masks reproduced in Tzara's article for *Vanity Fair*, I am hopeful I will find them sometime once research sites reopen following the conclusion of the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>204</sup> "Hiler, Hilaire." *Benezit Dictionary of Artists*. 31 Oct. 2011; Accessed 30 Jul. 2020.

<https://www.oxfordartonline.com/benezit/view/10.1093/benz/9780199773787.001.0001/acref-9780199773787-e-00087641>.

<sup>205</sup> <https://collection.cooperhewitt.org/people/18055037/bio>

<sup>206</sup> "In order to hide his unconscious instinct for domination, man has invented the mask in order to impose a conception of his pretend superiority and to appear more than he actually is." Tristan Tzara, "The Dada Masks of Hiler," *Vanity Fair* (1924): 88.

the dance masks of the Negroes are sometimes marvelous expressions of a naïve and unconscious faculty of invention.”<sup>207</sup> Tzara reiterates tropes about the directness of expression of Black artists and performers, and placed his contemporaries of African descent in an analogous relationship with Europeans of the distant past. Tzara identifies the mask form as unique given its direct connection to the human body, an aspect of his interest in performance established at the Cabaret Voltaire that he brought with him to Paris, discussed in the following chapter.

Tzara articulates his unique phenomenological understanding of how European artists should deploy materials. He writes,

They are made of different materials: tin, porcelain, copper, wire, cloth. They represent an ingenious application of the experiments on the painter, Picasso, which won a great renown at the beginning of Cubism – of which he was the originator – and which were closely followed by those of the Futurist Boccioni, and others of the advance guard.<sup>208</sup>

Describing Hiler’s masks explicitly in relationship to collage, Tzara here articulates the now canonical developmentalist teleology of twentieth-century European art.

For Tzara, Picasso is the ultimate innovator, and his works in collage approach the level of abstraction associated with music. He recounts that,

Picasso was the first to paste pieces of cloth and paper in his paintings. His idea was to produce, through differences in thickness and texture, the effect which musicians get through differences in tonality. It is evident that a musical note sounded on a violin is different from the same note sung by a human voice, and that this difference gives rise to orchestral harmonies.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Tzara, “The Dada Masks of Hiler,” 88.

<sup>208</sup> Tzara, “The Dada Masks of Hiler,” 46.

<sup>209</sup> Tzara, “The Dada Masks of Hiler,” 46.



Tzara's synesthetic understanding of collage evokes Scriabin's opera, "Prometheus," which he read in *The Blue Rider Almanac*. Tzara maintains that Hiler succeeded in the same endeavor, namely, "in giving a perfect unity to an ensemble," but through different means, namely the creation of masks. Tzara maintained an interest in the parallel structures undergirding the medium of papier collé and African *minkisi*, discussed further in the third chapter of this dissertation.

Tzara explicitly connects Hiler's masks to dadaist aesthetic theory and to performance.

Dadaism, which proposes to re-make, not only the forms and values of life, but also, those of art, has brought into the theater innovations which have wrought a profound impression. The theatre of tricks and illusions has no further excuse for being. The theatre should not 'imitate life,' but maintain its own artistic integrity; that is to say, it ought to live through its own scenic effects. [...] Hiler is among those who saw the necessity of adapting the theatre to new formulae which are more intimately connected with life.<sup>210</sup>

For Tzara, then, the ability to move beyond the picture plane and the page, and into life itself is the ultimate goal of dada, exemplified in masquerade, as well as in the deployment of new media such as photographic reproduction, textiles, and industrial materials, as in cubist collage.

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<sup>210</sup> Tzara, "The Dada Masks of Hiler," 46, 88.

## CHAPTER 2 - Provocative Personifications: Dada Aesthetics of Alterity at the Galerie Montaigne, Paris, 1921

In 1921, the Paris dadaists rented the top floor of the Champs-Élysées Theatre in the chic 8<sup>th</sup> arrondissement for the entire month of June, and Tzara took the lead in organizing a series of group productions. According to press accounts, the space – renamed the Galerie Montaigne – accommodated two hundred attendees at the first of three planned evening and matinee programs. The Soirée Dada, held in the evening on June 10, featured at least five acts – songs by Madame Bujaud, poems read by Louis Aragon and Valentin Parnak, a masquerade, and a play written by Tzara himself, interspersed with musical interludes by Monsieur Jolibois, a local porcelain repairman (Fig. 2.1).

The second item on the bill for that evening was a performance by poet Philippe Soupault entitled *The Matchbox: The President of Liberia Will Visit the Exhibition* (*La Boîte d'Allumettes: Le Président de la République de Libéria visitera l'exposition*). Wilber M. Judd, the Paris bureau correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*, immersively described its central character in a dramatic retelling of the event: “As the last note was vibrating through the Galerie, many noises were heard from the rear of the hall. The Dada idea of the president of the republic of Liberia, clothed in black and with his face to match, strolled in escorted by several of the most prominent Dadaists.”<sup>211</sup> Jean Jacquemont, the correspondent for *Le Petit Havre*, corroborated Judd’s account of Soupault’s racialized burlesque, writing that, “The dadaiste who plays this role wears red

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<sup>211</sup> Wilber M. Judd, “Dada Evening,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 13, 1921. TRZ 684 VII, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

jacket and tie. He wrapped his head in a black mask to look like a *nègre*.”<sup>212</sup> Although the journalists related different colors for Soupault’s attire, both describe Soupault’s actions as the impersonation of a subject of African descent.

Can *The Matchbox* be understood as a form of blackface despite Soupault’s eschewal of the direct application of viscous materials such as greasepaint or shoepolish to his face typically associated with the genre? Although the archives offer no direct evidence of Soupault’s familiarity with minstrelsy, jazz historian Matthew F. Jordan’s research on the French reception of Black American music clearly demonstrates that there was a context for Soupault’s apprehension of the form, with minstrel shows touring France beginning in 1870.<sup>213</sup> Furthermore, Soupault’s fiction and poetry of the inter-war period frequently operationalized stereotyped Black characters, and, indeed, his first autobiography, *Histoire d’un homme blanc*, published in 1927, was grounded in a racialized self-understanding.<sup>214</sup> While further details of his costume remain unknown,

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<sup>212</sup> “Le dadaïste qui joue ce rôle porte jaquette et cravate rouges. Il s’est enveloppé la tête d’un masque noir pour avoir l’air d’un nègre.” Jean Jacquemont, “Chronique Parisienne,” *Le Petit Havre*, June 14, 1921. TRZ 684 VII, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

<sup>213</sup> For a discussion of minstrelsy in France in the nineteenth century see Matthew F. Jordan, “Chapter 1,” *Jazz Changes: A History of French Discourse on Jazz from Ragtime to Be-bop* (Claremont Graduate University, 1998). Jordan analyzes the French obsession with the cakewalk circa 1903 in the first chapter of his book. See Matthew F. Jordan, “Chapter 1 – Vamp on the Meaning of Jazz: The Cakewalk Comes to Town,” *Le Jazz: Jazz and French Cultural Identity* (Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 17-38.

<sup>214</sup> For an analysis of *Histoire d’un nègre* (1925) and *Le Grand Homme* (1929) see Henry-Jacques Dupuy, *Philippe Soupault: textes, bibliographie, portraits, facsimilés* (Paris: Éditions Pierre Seghers, 1957). For contextualization of Soupault’s *Le Nègre* (1927) within the white French literary world’s reception of jazz, see Pim Higginson, “Chapter 1,” *Scoring Race: Jazz, Fiction, and Francophone Africa* (Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester, NY: James Currey, 2017), 51-95. For an analysis of Soupault’s *La Mort de Nick Carter* (1926) see Jonathan Eburne, “Dime Novel Politics,” *Surrealism and the Art of Crime* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 96-138.

Myriam Mallart Brusossa, “Histoire d’un blanc de Philippe Soupault: Une autobiographie surréaliste?,” *Texto, Género y Discurso en el Ámbito Francófono* (Salamanca, Spain: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, Aquilafuente, 2016), 461-470.

ultimately Soupault's tools are less important than *The Matchbox*'s underlying premise and intended signification, which can be categorized as a form of blackface.

These reports point to a previously unaddressed issue in studies of dadaism and avant-garde performance, namely the use of what Michael Omi and Howard Winant term racialized representations during the interwar period in France.<sup>215</sup> Moreover, *The Matchbox* marks an important departure: while earlier dadaist events incorporated objects and techniques which emblemized so-called "primitive" or direct artistic expression (perhaps most infamously Richard Huelsenbeck's use of drums at the Cabaret Voltaire), the Galerie Montaigne production deployed a human subject. Soupault's decision to impersonate the democratically elected leader of the first independent republic in West Africa and the public's positive response noted in the press raises a critical question about the role of race – and racism – in dadaist aesthetics. How did French popular constructions of African identity, and specifically in this case that of Liberia, contribute to their artistic aims? Acknowledging *The Matchbox*'s roots in an art form derived from notions of white supremacy, additional interpretations of the performance begin to emerge when placed in dialogue with other aspects of the Soirée Dada.

Soupault's use of blackface for *The Matchbox* only becomes fully legible when considered within the entirety of the Galerie Montaigne production. Seeking to collapse the distance between the artwork and the viewer through provocation, the reception of the dadaists' performances of June 10, 1921 are essential to understanding not just the

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<sup>215</sup> "But while the act of categorizing people and assigning different attributes to such categories may be universal, the categories themselves are subject to enormous variation over historical time and space. The definitions, meanings, and overall coherence of prevailing social categories are always subject to multiple interpretations." Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "Chapter 4: The Theory of Racial Formation," *Racial Formation in the United States* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 105.

methods, but also the intended meaning, of the dadaists' aesthetic program. While Soupault performed alterity, Tzara embodied it directly in his prologue for *The Gas Heart* (*Le cœur à gaz*): his French pronunciation incited fury in the audience. Furthermore, the dadaists transformed the seventh floor of the Champs-Élysées Theatre into an absurdly decorated dada salon, drawing from the press derisive analogies to an insane asylum. Ultimately, when contextualized within the widespread fascination with African cultural products immediately following the conclusion of the First World War termed '*le tumulte noir*' and the milieu of xenophobia associated with the *rappel à l'ordre*, the Paris dada group deployed a form of satire attentive to not only race, but also nationality and neurodiversity for the Galerie Montaigne production. Incorporating *The Matchbox* into scholarly perspectives on the Galerie Montaigne production acts as a corrective lens through which to discern the dadaists' mobilization of various vectors of alterity in order to criticize the boundaries defining insider and outsider as well as art and artifact in European society. Nevertheless, despite Soupault's intention to deploy blackface satirically, his performance cannot be extricated from its racist underpinnings; *The Matchbox* thus constitutes a failure of dadaist critical aesthetics.

### Resounding Silences Within *Le Tumulte Noir*

Despite the press descriptions and references to the production in artists' memoirs, scholars have yet to analyse Soupault's use of blackface in his performance for the Galerie Montaigne. Although Michel Sanouillet recapitulated the newspaper

accounts of the evening in his groundbreaking *Dada in Paris* (1965),<sup>216</sup> it was not until forty years later that *The Matchbox* was again mentioned.<sup>217</sup> Scholarship on dadaist performance primarily remains focused on other events, prioritizing the now-legendary evenings in Zurich during the war and the internecine debates and sparring with other avant-garde groups of the Paris circle following Tzara's relocation there in 1920.<sup>218</sup> The Galerie Montaigne is similarly omitted from more recent examinations of the role of nationalism and xenophobia in shaping the discourses of Paris dada.<sup>219</sup>

Most tellingly, the increasingly robust body of literature on the role of alterity as a guiding intellectual framework in the development of European modern art has failed to address Soupault's performance at the Galerie Montaigne. Similarly, studies devoted specifically to both Soupault and Tzara's understandings of African cultural practices have not considered the *The Matchbox*.<sup>220</sup> Furthermore, in the field of Africana studies,

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<sup>216</sup> Michel Sanouillet, *Dada in Paris*, rev. Anne Sanouillet, trans. Sharmila Ganguly (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 205-209.

<sup>217</sup> Dachy and Witkovsky refer to the blackface of *The Matchbox* as “*une cagoule noire*,” or a black balaclava, and “*grimé en Noir*,” respectively. However, these projects offered a chronology of important events, rather than substantive discussion. See Marc Dachy, *Dada Archives / Chronique* (Paris: Éditions Hazan, 2005), 512. Matthew Witkovsky, “Chronologie,” *Dada*, ed. Leah Dickerman (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2005), 247.

<sup>218</sup> Gordon Fredrick Browning, *Tristan Tzara: The Genesis of the Dada Poem or, from Dada to Aa* (Stuttgart: Verlag, 1979). John D. Erickson, *Dada: Performance, Poetry, and Art* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984). Rose Lee Goldberg, “Chapter 3, Dada Performance: ‘The Idea of Art and the Idea of Life,’” *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present* (New York: Harry N Abrams Inc., 1979), 34–48. Elizabeth Legge, “Blinds and Blackness: Looking Again at Tristan Tzara,” *Virgin Microbe: Essays on Dada*, ed. David Hopkins and Michael White (Urbana-Champagne, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014), 181–204. Elmer Peterson, ed., *Paris Dada: The Barbarians Storm the Gates* (Farmington Hills, MI: G K Hall, 2001). Arnauld Pierre, “The confrontation of ‘modern values’: A Moral History of Dada in Paris,” *The Dada Seminars* (Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, 2005), 241-267.

<sup>219</sup> Thomas Hunkeler, “Claiming Dada for the French,” *Decentering the Avant-Garde*, ed. Per Backstrom and Benedikt Hjartarson, *Avant-Garde Critical Studies* 30 (Amsterdam, New York, 2014), 169-85.

<sup>220</sup> Yaëlle Biro, “Engagement et Poésie: Tristan Tzara et Les Arts Africains et Océaniens,” *Tristan Tzara: L’Homme approximatif* (Strasbourg, 2015), 231-241. Jean-Claude Blachère, “L’Évolution des Conceptions Primitivistes de Tristan Tzara,” *Le Modèle Nègre* (Dakar, 1981), 117 – 178. Tristan Tzara, Marc Dachy, *Découverte des arts dits primitifs, suivi de poèmes nègres* (Paris: Éditions Hazan, 2006).

blackface performance remains an understudied aspect of representations of Blackness in France during the interwar period, despite an established body of scholarship on its development and evolution in the United States and a growing literature on what Danielle Roper has most recently termed, “hemispherical blackface,” in the Americas.<sup>221</sup> This chapter unites these disparate but related fields of study, attending to dada aesthetics, the tenor of political discourse in the Third Republic, and the racialized environment of interwar Paris.

### Deploying Imagined Blackness: Contextualizing *The Matchbox*

Soupault’s performance exemplifies the European reception of American minstrelsy: while not attempting to represent black cultural practices, *The Matchbox* conjures a certain type of Black subjectivity that the dadaists found useful in achieving their critical aims. Blackface minstrelsy developed in the ante-bellum United States as a means of negotiating the anxiety provoked by interracial interaction within a rigidly hierarchical society. Whites could exert control over black art forms they admired, and, equally importantly, over the bodies in which they were lodged, through impersonation and derision.<sup>222</sup> Although the conditions of the trans-Atlantic trade and chattel slavery from which minstrelsy emerged in the nineteenth-century United States must necessarily be differentiated from those of twentieth-century French colonization, the urban centers

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<sup>221</sup> For an important and comprehensive study of the French national conception of blackness in all its complexity and contradiction, see Pap Ndiaye, *La condition noire: essai sur une minorité française* (Paris: Calmann Levy, 2008). Danielle Roper, “Blackface at the Andean Fiesta: Performing Blackness in the Danza de Caporales,” *Latin American Research Review* 54: no. 2 (Spring 2019): 381+. Gale Academic OneFile (accessed June 7, 2020). [https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/apps/doc/A594318695/AONE?u=upenn\\_main&sid=AONE&xid=ca897c72](https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/apps/doc/A594318695/AONE?u=upenn_main&sid=AONE&xid=ca897c72).

<sup>222</sup> Eric Lott, *Love & Theft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

of interwar France underwent similar demographic changes as people of African descent from the continent, the Caribbean, and North and South America converged on *les metropoles*.<sup>223</sup> While French forms of racialized performance share the central characteristic of minstrelsy in the Americas, namely the application of a covering to approximate melanated skin tones, the exaggeration of facial features into caricature (full red lips and white rimmed eyes) as well as the use of props (the white gloves and cane) has been less consistently documented.

Furthermore, blackface was primarily a feature of French bourgeois parties, rather than an integral part of the national entertainment business as in the United States. For example, Tzara himself attended the Maison Watteau ball (Fig. 2.2) on March 23, 1924, along with an unidentified man in the foreground whose darkened face and white gloves represent two of the sartorial elements of American minstrelsy outlined above.<sup>224</sup> One notable exception was dealer Paul Guillaume's *Fête Nègre* of 1919 held at the Champs-Élysées Theatre. Historian John Warne Monroe's research demonstrates that the event consisted of a short lecture on African sculpture by Guillaume, poetry readings by Blaise Cendrars, and a dance interpretation of Henri Trilles's 1912 account of his time in Gabon, *Chez les Fang* – all in blackface.<sup>225</sup> Guillaume's differentiation between high art,

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<sup>223</sup> Despite limitations on demographic analyses, studies of the various African-descended populations circulating in the French capital during the first half of the twentieth century are robust – from the Caribbean intellectual elites who would found *négritude* to the valorous *Tirailleurs sénégalais* of World War I to the African Americans who brought jazz to Montmartre and Montparnasse. See Darlene Clark Hine, Tricia Danielle Keaton, Stephen Small, *Black Europeans and African Diaspora* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009). See also Julius O. Adegunle, Hettie V. Williams, ed., *Converging Identities: Blackness in the Modern African Diaspora* (Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2013).

<sup>224</sup> Billy Klüver and Julie Martin, *Kiki's Paris: Artists and Lovers 1900-1930* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989).

<sup>225</sup> John Warne Monroe, *Metropolitan Fetish: African Sculpture and the Imperial French Invention of Primitive Art* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2019).



represented by the West African sculptures he sold in conjunction with the performance, and popular art such as jazz in his 1919 lecture had become obsolete by the time Tzara attended the Maison Watteau ball.

On the whole, the French entertainment industry during the interwar period was dominated by Black performers in costumes derived from African stereotypes, perhaps best exemplified in Josephine Baker's *Revue Nègre*.<sup>226</sup> Nevertheless, the images used for advertizing Black dance performances and jazz concerts – including Baker's ensemble – as well as for trademarking commercial goods in France grew increasingly derogatory and stereotypical during the second and third decades of the twentieth century.<sup>227</sup> The most infamous example of the transposition of minstrelsy tropes into the French colonial context is the marketing for the breakfast food Bonhomme Banania with a *tirailleur sénégalais*, whose smiling face beneath his characteristic red fez grew increasingly schematized. By the mid-1950s the powerful image of the African infantryman had been transformed into what Mia Bagneris calls “a cartoon of colonialist fantasy.”<sup>228</sup> Indeed, Rosalind Krauss's term “black deco” remains a compelling shorthand for the

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<sup>226</sup> Mae G. Henderson and Charlene B. Regeister, ed. *The Josephine Baker Critical Reader: Selected Writings on the Entertainer and Activist* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 2017). Nineteenth-century precedents include Black circus performers, perhaps most notably the formerly enslaved Cuban man known as Chocolat. See Marika Maynard, “Les artistes noirs du cirque aux XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Le modèle noir: de Géricault à Matisse*, Cécile Debray, ed. (Paris: Flammarion for the Musée d'Orsay, 2019), 226-241. Lyneise Williams, “Chocolat the Clown: Not Just Black,” *Latin Blackness in Parisian Visual Culture, 1852-1932* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 55-96.

<sup>227</sup> Dana Hale, “5: Sub-Saharan Africans: La force noire,” *Races on Display: French Representations of Colonized Peoples, 1886-1940* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 2008), 97.

<sup>228</sup> Mia Bagneris, “The Great Colonial Minstrel Show: Reconsidering Africa in the Art of Palmer Hayden,” *NKA: Journal of Contemporary African Art* 41 (November 2017): 25.

amalgamation of American minstrelsy tropes and Black cultural forms into the French colonial image-world.<sup>229</sup>

While the French press wryly noted the dearth of individuals of African descent at Guillaume's *Fête Nègre* in 1919, the exact racial demographics of the audience attending the opening night at the Galerie Montaigne in the same theater just two years later remain unknown.<sup>230</sup> Nevertheless, the archives demonstrate the presence of at least one dadaist of African descent: Vance Lowry (1888-1948), the American banjo and saxophone player.<sup>231</sup> As a friend and collaborator of the poet Jean Cocteau, Lowry may have been present at a number of dada events, perhaps even Tzara's *Manifesto of Feeble Love and Bitter Love* which debuted at the Galerie Povolozky on December 12, 1920, with its musical counterpoints to Tzara's prose performance.<sup>232</sup> Soupault's use of blackface thus can be understood as responding to the increasing prevalence of American racist caricatures in interwar Paris as well as the presence of African descended persons within

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<sup>229</sup> Rosalind Krauss, "No More Play," *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 87-118, 151-170.

<sup>230</sup> Unfortunately, recovering demographic information along racial lines remains a near impossibility given that France does not collect this information in the national census. Philippe Dewitte, "Le Paris noir de l'entre-deux-guerres," *Le Paris des étrangères depuis un siècle*, ed. André Kaspi and Antoine Marès (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1989), 159.

<sup>231</sup> Jazz historians David Miller and Tony Thomas are currently working on a biography of Vance Lowry; piecing together archival information in France and the United States they have determined that Lowry arrived in Paris via London around 1918 and stayed until 1931. During that time he worked with both Black and white musicians, including Jean Wiéner who was the house pianist at the *Gaya bay* and *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*. Thomas believes that Wiéner was responsible for connecting Cocteau and Lowry. Cocteau sent Lowry a record featuring several different live performances of Lowry's 1923 song "Love Lesson (*Leçon d'amour*)" recorded live at various clubs in France. Bibliothèque National de France, 4-VM7-10 (2804). A photograph of Lowry at *Le Boeuf sur le Toit* appears on page 330 in Nancy Cunard's *New Negro Anthology* (1934). Personal communications with the author, April 2019. For more information about African American musicians during the interwar period, see Jeffrey Green, Rainer E. Lotz and Howard Rye, *Black Europe: The Sounds and Images of Black People in Europe, pre-1927* (Hambergen, Germany: Bear Family Productions, 2013).

<sup>232</sup> Adrian Sudhalter, "Tristan Tzara, Literary Montage, Dadaglobe," *Before Publication: Montage in Art, Architecture, and Book Design*, edited by Nanni Baltzer and Martino Stierli (Zurich: Park Books, 2016), 44-56.

the dada circle itself, in line with broader demographic changes. While *The Matchbox* initially appears to merely replicate the uniquely French forms of widespread bigotry of this historical moment, the dadaists' renowned contrarianism necessitates a closer examination of the performance and its role within the Galerie Montaigne production.

### Slipshod Subversion: Soupault's Caricature of Charles Dunbar Burgess King

Judd's account of *The Matchbox* in the *Chicago Tribune* reveals more about Soupault's activities, informing us that, "He examined the pictures on the walls, all the creations of Dada artists urged on by Dada notions, and "très charmanted" everyone, without exception, proving that he is a loyal Dada, himself."<sup>233</sup> Soupault, masquerading as the President of Liberia – in actuality, a man named Charles Dunbar Burgess King (1875-1961) – mimed the work of the art critic, examining and evaluating each object included in the exhibition.

Three photographs by the Agence Rol agency document King's visit to Paris in February of 1921, just a few months prior to the Galerie Montaigne events.<sup>234</sup> Each records him as he laid a wreath at the Arc de Triomphe on February 18 as part of the commemorative ceremonies at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (Fig. 2.3). King wears the formal clothing of a Western visiting head of state: a tuxedo beneath his long wool coat with fur collar, spats, a walking stick, and a top hat. In the photographs he strides

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<sup>233</sup> Wilber M. Judd, "Dada Evening," *Chicago Tribune*, June 13, 1921. TRZ 684 VII, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

<sup>234</sup> Founded in 1904 by Maurice Rol, Agence Rol was one of the three major French photographic reporting agencies of the twentieth century. Photographers for the agency recorded a variety of current events and today more than 80,000 negatives are housed at the Bibliothèque nationale de France. See Dominique Versavel, "Agence Rol (1904-1937)," BnF Shared Heritage. <https://heritage.bnf.fr/Bibliothèquesorient/en/agence-rol-article>

towards the camera, his brow furrowed in concentration or perhaps against the glare of the sun that reflects off his spectacles. Although these exact images don't seem to have been reproduced in any of the major illustrated newspapers, King's visit was widely reported in the French press, and suggest Soupault's inspiration for the central character in his Galerie Montaigne performance later that year.<sup>235</sup>

Judd's account further aids our understanding of *The Matchbox*, describing Soupault's actions and the audience's response, and alerting us to the title's origins:

As a token of the esteem in which he held the emancipated skill of the Dadas, he presented each of the receiving committee with a candle, which he lighted, and which he as quickly extinguished and repocketed. The remaining matches were distributed among a not-unappreciative audience which laughed uproariously.<sup>236</sup>

Soupault parodied the event at the Arc de Triomphe – itself also a performance just a few blocks up the avenue from the theater – turning the inspection of troops and presentation of honors by King into a dada-ified walk around a gallery filled with avant-garde art. Indeed, in his report of the performance, Jacquemont stated explicitly that it was a mockery of a *vernissage*.<sup>237</sup> If the lit candle symbolized knowledge and the matches handed out to the audience the critical tools used to assess dada artworks, then Soupault's actions render “The President of the Republic of Liberia” as the quintessential, and thus quintessentially absurd, critic.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> *La Croix*, *La Dépêche*, *Excelsior*, *L'Intransigeant*, *L'Homme libre*, and *Le Matin* all covered Charles Dunbar Burgess King's diplomatic visit to Paris on 18 February 1921.

<sup>236</sup> Wilber M. Judd, “Dada Evening,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 13, 1921. TRZ 684 VII, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

<sup>237</sup> *Vernissage* refers to the private opening of an exhibition, so termed for the unique and frequently overpowering smell of the room after painters applied the final coats of varnish to their work.

<sup>238</sup> Although Soupault's use of a candle in *The Matchbox* might seem to be connected to another facet of the memorial at the Arc de Triomphe, the eternal flame would not be installed until 1923, two years after

The Dada Manifesto, written and published by Tzara in 1918, underscores this initial reading of *The Matchbox*. It states, “A work of art is never beautiful by decree, objectively and for all. Hence criticism is useless, it exists only subjectively, for each man separately, without the slightest character of universality.”<sup>239</sup> For the dadaists, evaluation of art is always subjective and thus the notion of a career defined by such assessments would be futile and asinine. Furthermore, Soupault’s parody of the *vernissage* in *The Matchbox* was predicated on the derogation of persons of African descent central to blackface. In other words, the critic is absurd not only because of what he does at the Galerie Montaigne, but because he is Black, and specifically African.

Yet why did Soupault find Liberian identity to be most appropriate for furthering his indictment of the modern art critic? The primary quality for which Black sculptors and jazz musicians were admired by the dadaists – their alleged unmediated artistic expressions – cannot be easily assigned to or located within the specific individual that Soupault chose for *The Matchbox*. Indeed, unlike his Zurich-based colleague Richard Huselsenbeck noted for his drumming performances, Soupault was not interested in representing or channeling European stereotypes of “primitive African artists” – rather he sought to portray a different type of Black subject altogether, namely a bourgeois politician.<sup>240</sup>

A member of the elite class descended from formerly enslaved Americans who founded the colony of Liberia in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, King rose to prominence

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the performance and President King’s visit. My thanks to Christine Poggi for pointing out this potential connection.

<sup>239</sup> Tristan Tzara, *Dada Manifesto*, 5.

<sup>240</sup> David Gascogne, “Boomboom and Hullabaloo: Rhythm in the Zurich Dada Revolution,” *Paragraph* 33:2 (2010): 197-214.

following his service first as Attorney General and then Secretary of State. In his role as a diplomat, he attended the Paris Peace Talks as well as the First Pan-African Congress in 1919, the year before his election to the presidency. King was in Paris in 1921 as part of an international tour to attempt to renegotiate the terms of a loan from a joint consortium of banks in England, France, Germany, and the United States.<sup>241</sup> Soupault's choice of a member of the West African elite for the central character of *The Matchbox* thus seemingly replicated mainstream French attitudes towards Black intellectuals and, specifically the *évolué*, the term used to refer to colonial subjects identified as successfully assimilated into European cultural mores.

Soupault's use of blackface (whether facepaint, a mask designed for the occasion, or even a balaclava described in the press and scholarly accounts) pinpointed the ways in which the racial and socio-economic hierarchies of interwar France intersected and, at times, conflicted. The front page of *Le Petit Journal* of February 18, 1921 (Fig. 2.4) includes two images of Black subjects – a reproduction of President King at the center of the page and a cartoon depicting an African descended woman at the bottom of the page.<sup>242</sup> The phrase below the woman holding a basket as she knocks on the door of the apartment – “*C'est la blanchisseuse*” (“It's the laundress”) – clues the reader in to her occupation. The visual/verbal pun is clear: a Black woman is the one to literally whiten (*blanc/blanche*) your clothes. In contrast to the caricature of the working class woman, King is depicted in *Le Petit Journal* in photorealistic terms. The brief article on King

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<sup>241</sup> The Liberian government obtained a loan of \$1,700,000 in 1909 and another for \$5 million in 1918 in order to fund improvements to the infrastructure of its capital, Monrovia, including establishing a railroad network and building a hospital. Benjamin Brawley, “Chapter IX: Liberia,” *Social History of the American Negro* (New York, 1921), 200-201.

<sup>242</sup> My thanks to Luise Mahler for directing my attention to these images.

above the cartoon nevertheless devotes equal attention to his physical appearance as to his diplomatic accomplishments. *Le Petit Journal* reports that, “The President King is of medium stature and wears a thick black moustache and gold-rimmed eyeglasses,” while also emphasizing his limited linguistic abilities, adding that, “He speaks only English.”<sup>243</sup> The rationale for Soupault’s decision to impersonate this particular individual, then, comes into clearer focus: the absurdity of *The Matchbox* performance was furthered when considering King’s race in relationship to his class.

As a member of the international political elite, Soupault-as-King was invited to attend the *vernissage* at the Champs-Élysées Theatre, but he could not – and was never expected to – fully participate in the events. The laughter of the Galerie Montaigne audience at “the Liberian President” evaluating the artworks on display reflects widespread attitudes designating Africans as incapable of achieving “civilization,” always defined in European and French terms.<sup>244</sup> Soupault-as-King’s understanding of the artworks on display was undermined by his dada-ified response as well as the character’s spoken words.

In his influential and pioneering 1952 book, *Black Skin, White Masks*, the Martinican psychiatrist Frantz Fanon explored the philosophical underpinnings and psychological impact of French colonization on its subjects. Despite the fact that Liberia was not a French colony, Fanon’s phenomenology of Blackness in modern France helps

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<sup>243</sup> “Le Président King est de taille moyenne, porte une assez forte moustache noire et des lunettes à monture d’or. Il ne parle que l’anglais.” Unidentified author, “Le Président de la République de Libéria est arrivé à Paris,” *Le Petit Journal*, February 18, 1921, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

<sup>244</sup> For more information about the particularities of the French imperial “*mission civilisatrice*,” see Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997).

to inform our reading of Soupault's performance. Fanon placed language acquisition at the centre of the worldview of the colonized subject, observing,

It should be understood that historically the black man wants to speak French, since it is the key to open doors which only fifty years ago still remained closed to him. The Antillean who falls within our description goes out of his way to seek the subtleties and rarities of the language – a way of proving to himself that he is culturally adequate.<sup>245</sup>

Fanon argued that despite the non-white colonial subject's internalization of French cultural values, he will inevitably be forced to recognize his fixity within the "epidermal schema" through contact with the white world. In other words, no matter how well one speaks French, one can never be French if one is not white: language cannot efface race, the auditory cannot supersede the visual.

Predicated on the linguistic and racial complexities outlined by Fanon, the verbal element of *The Matchbox* proves fundamental to its meaning. Jacquemont confirmed that Soupault did, in fact, speak during his walk around the gallery, and described his actions in detail:

He traverses the room considering and appraising the works hung on the walls, commenting on them with some burlesque official compliments. [...] Candles are lit and the president decorates all the Dadaists successively. This parody of the *vernissage* is quite successful. And we applaud it.<sup>246</sup>

The approval of Soupault's character ('*très charmant*' cited by Judd) becomes farcial.

The dadaists were likely attuned to the fact that King was monolingual, even if the

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<sup>245</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox, (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2008), 21.

<sup>246</sup> "Il traverse la salle en considérant en connaisseur les œuvres accrochées aux murs, les commentant de quelques compliments burlesquement officiels. Le président a aussi son petit succès, surtout lorsqu'ayant été complimenté il lit un discours de circonstance en style 'dada'. On allume des bougies et le président décore successivement tous les dadaïstes. Cette parodie des vernissages salonesques est assez réussie. Et on l'applaudit." Jean Jacquemont, "Chronique Parisienne," *Le Petit Havre*, June 14, 1921. TRZ 684 VII, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.



audience was not, and the meaning of *The Matchbox* rested on the equation of fluency in multiple languages with high social status. Whether Soupault utilized his perfect French as a native speaker, mimicked an accent in French, or spoke in English with a French accent, his performance was predicated on the idea that Blackness was incompatible with Frenchness.

*The Matchbox* derived its legibility from the transparency of Soupault's dissimulation: the mask, in conjunction with the voice of the performer, was never intended to fool the Galerie Montaigne audience. Ultimately, *The Matchbox* can be understood as a negative assessment of art criticism predicated on the absurdity of the actions, gestures, and race of the central character combined.

Another interpretation, however, remains open: given the dadaists' interest in subverting artistic conventions, *The Matchbox* could have been intended as a critique of blackface – and the material and ideological forms that undergirded it – through utilization of the form itself. The Dada Manifesto outlines the group's tactics. Tzara wrote,

I'm writing this manifesto to show that you can perform contrary actions at the same time, in one single, fresh breath; I am against action; as for continual contradiction, and affirmation too, I am neither for nor against them, and I won't explain myself because I hate common sense.<sup>247</sup>

In other words, Soupault may have impersonated Charles Dunbar Burgess King in order to render the absurdities of race and class hierarchies visible, looking askance at blackface even as he deployed it.

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<sup>247</sup> Tzara, *Dada Manifesto*, 3.

Despite the possibility that Soupault intended to use blackface to satirize artistic critique and hierarchies of material culture, the form's inextricability from racist representations renders it a failure. Indeed, one imagines that the performance would have been received differently by Mr. Lowry were he in the audience at the Champs-Élysées Theater that evening, given the painful history of blackface in the United States. Situating *The Matchbox* in relationship to the installation at the Galerie Montaigne and another production from the evening, namely Tzara's play, *The Gas Heart*, renders this interpretation of Soupault's motivations plausible, even as it further highlights the performance's ultimate failure.

#### Politicized Parody: A Referendum on The French Far Right

What were the artworks "urged on by Dada notions" admired by Soupault in the Galerie Montaigne? The space itself, located on the seventh floor of the chic Champs-Élysées Theatre, consisted of two rooms: one was converted into a gallery for displaying dada artworks, while the other was set up for performances. A small platform at the left of the latter room served as the stage with a full length mirror and a small balcony decorated with a row of ties and a mannequin (Fig. 2.5). An open umbrella, a soft hat, and a cello with a white cravat around its neck hung from the ceiling, while the center of the room contained a buff-coloured tent covering a piano. The display elicited a range of analogies from the press.

Judd used the French term "*asile d'aliénés*" to indicate the room's resemblance to an insane asylum, asserting that the dadaists were acting outside the norms of even the

most advanced European artists.<sup>248</sup> Jacquemont likewise described the display: “On the walls, a whole exhibition of strange drawings and watercolours, pink question marks on a blue background, cubist quirks, monstrous human forms, apocalyptic animals, wax ears, and so on. ... a pair of suspenders.”<sup>249</sup> While the archives yield no evidence of wax ears, Tzara did produce an exhibition catalogue in the form of a booklet which included a list of objects loosely according with those on view in the gallery.<sup>250</sup> The checklist shows an impressive total of eighty-one artworks by twenty-three different artists representing four countries – France, Germany, Italy, and the United States. Of these, fourteen of the artworks directly reference the human body, yet, as Judd’s comments suggest, the formal characteristics of these objects flout veristic modes of representation.

Johannes Baargeld’s *Self-Portrait* (Fig. 2.6), identifiable in photographs of the installation and included in the list of works in the booklet, proffers a criticism of artistic form as well as the supposed psychic and bodily integrity of the modern subject. Situated on a flat dimensionless cream background, the portrait – assembled from a photograph of the artist’s head, cropped at the forehead, and a photograph of the torso of the Venus de Milo, cropped at the bellybutton – rests on a legless table, cut from a magazine.<sup>251</sup> The

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<sup>248</sup> “At first glance we thought we had made a mistake and were in the private salon of an ‘*asile d’aliénés*.’ For, despite the fact that good-looking and well-dressed people sat about quietly, and therefore, intelligently, the decorations of the room bespoke what, to be charitable, we shall call a complete disregard for the most advanced theories of cubist and futurist art.” Wilber M. Judd, “Dada Evening,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 13, 1921. TRZ 684 VII, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

<sup>249</sup> “Sur les murs, toute un exposition de dessins et d’aquarelles étranges, des points d’interrogation roses sur fond bleu, des bizarreries cubistes, des forms humaines monstrueuses, des animaux apocalyptiques, des oreilles en cire, etc. ... une paire de bretelles.” Jean Jacquemont, “Chronique Parisienne,” *Le Petit Havre*, June 14, 1921. TZR 684 VII, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

<sup>250</sup> *Soirée Dada: Galerie Montaigne: le vendredi 10 juin 1921 à 9 heures, 1921*. Kunsthaus Zurich, DADA V:19 / DS 2.

<sup>251</sup> Johannes Theodor Baargeld was the pseudonym for Alfred Emanuel Ferdinand Gruenwald, a lawyer friend of Max Ernst’s and co-founder of Dada branch in Cologne in the autumn of 1919. See Walter Vitt, “Baargeld, Johannes Theodor,” *Grove Art Online*, 2003,

impossibility of the figure, despite the initially naturalistic-seeming transitions between head and body, draws our attention to the intertwined nature of the structures and processes of vision and cognition. Baargeld's self-portrait thus targets the tradition of mimesis.

Man Ray's photographs of assemblages of inanimate objects entitled *Woman (La femme)* and *Man (L'Homme)* from 1918-1920 similarly interrogate aesthetic and social norms through the fragmenting and analogizing of the human body. Like Baargeld's self portrait, the photographs were itemized in the catalogue and remained in Tzara's possession after the exhibition, slated for inclusion in *Dadaglobe*.

*Woman* (Fig. 2.7) comprises two spherical metal reflectors affixed to the top of a glass plate arrayed with six clothespins draped with fishing line. Constructed from the very materials of the photographic studio, the photographic reflectors become breasts, the glass plates and clothespins symbolize the spine and ribs, and the fishing line evokes blood vessels or arteries. *Woman's* series of reversals evokes the positive/negative relationship central to the medium itself, most notably in the reflection of the artist's room in the globes. The interior of the studio is transferred onto the globe's surface through the light of the flash, which in turn is transferred twice more via the photographic developing process – from the assemblage to the filmic negative, and finally from the negative to the positive gelatin silver print. Reversals occur also in the abstracted referent of the photograph: the holes in the globes initially appear as solid black spaces; their

status as voids becomes apparent as a result of shadows cast onto the support behind the assemblage.

Produced first in a recapitulation of the Biblical story of creation, woman's mate – *Man* (Fig. 2.8) – comprises an eggbeater affixed to a wall and photographed strategically so as to resemble a man's genitals.<sup>252</sup> In this photograph, the shadows become the fulcrum for visual play and ideological subversion. Whereas *Woman* exists in stasis, *Man* is in motion: the long, slender, repetitive shadows of the tongs create an illusion that the ensemble is moving away from its support and into the viewer's space. By transforming the assemblage into a discrete work of art through the medium of photography, Man Ray proposes that the photograph is independent of its referent, rather than merely an index.<sup>253</sup> Furthermore, the diptych's tension between its traditional European subject matter and innovative media – like Baargeld's self-portrait and Soupault's blackface performance – acts as a criticism of conventional modes of artistic production through satire.

Aste d'Esparbes, like Judd and Jacquemont, found the dadaists' *Exposition Internationale* to be confounding. In his review published in *Comoedia*, he likened, "The walls of the Galerie Montaigne resemble the strange interior of a palace of a Negro

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<sup>252</sup> The work is incorrectly attributed as *Woman* on the Centre Georges Pompidou's website, perhaps as result of annotation on image, which is not in Man Ray's hand. For one of the earliest analyses of the role of gender in dada see Nancy Ring's dissertation, "New York Dada and the crisis of masculinity: Man Ray, Francis Picabia, and Marcel Duchamp in the United States, 1913-1921" (Chicago, IL: Northwestern University, 1991).

<sup>253</sup> Adrian Sudhalter discusses Man Ray's photograph as, "complete in itself rather than functioning as a trace of a missing original." See Sudhalter, *Dadaglobe*, 52.

King.”<sup>254</sup> Read together, the reviews suggest that “Africa” functioned as a category denoting incomprehensibility through which the Parisian public understood dada, even if African objects were, in fact, absent from the display. The high regard for African sculpture among the Parisian dadaists suggests another possible reading of Soupault’s performance of the Liberian President’s visit to the exhibition at the *Salon Dada*. The Black subject’s positive assessment of the installation at the Galerie Montaigne could be seen as demonstrating commonality between the West African objects admired by avant-garde artists in European ethnographic collections and those of the dadaists. This framing positions the character’s reactions as insightful, rather than misguided, suggesting the means by which the group intended to render the critics and conservatives in the audience – rather than the Black subject invoked in *The Matchbox* – the butt of their joke.

Two of the artworks that Soupault submitted for the exhibition, *Portrait of an Imbecile* (*Portrait d’un imbécile*) (Fig. 2.9) and *Portrait of An Unknown* (*Portrait d’un inconnu*), similarly addressed issues of aesthetic standards through activation of the viewer’s body. Consisting of a mirror and an empty frame, respectively, these artworks replace the prestigious oil on canvas with the viewer’s reflection and the wall of the exhibition space.<sup>255</sup> *Portrait of An Imbecile* furthers Soupault’s indictment of art critics and the audience laid out in *The Matchbox*: the viewer/critic becomes the target of the insult in the title through the deployment of the mirror. The replacement of the painted face of a conventional portrait with a potentially limitless number of faces furthers the

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<sup>254</sup> “Les murs de la Galerie Montaigne ressemblent étrangement à l’intérieur d’un palais de roi nègre!” Aste d’Esparbes, “A La Galerie Montaigne: Le Vernissage de l’Exposition Dada,” *Comoedia*, June 7, 1921. TZR 684 VII, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

<sup>255</sup> Marc Dachy, *The Dada Movement, 1915-1923* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990).

dadaists' dual goals of rendering visible the way in which the form and meaning of any work of art is shaped by both its maker and its audience, and drawing the visitor into a dialectical relationship with aesthetic experience. *Portrait of an Imbecile* also undertakes a standard dada tactic – insult – by pre-establishing the viewer's incompetence. In contrast, the canvas of *Portrait of an Unknown* dissolves into empty space, drawing attention to the architectural and ideological surfaces upon which painting depends for its status, namely the frame and the wall. Soupault's use of the term *inconnu* reconnects this work to the dadaists' criticism of the xenophobia undergirding the national collective mourning in the so-called *Procès Barrés* – the mock trial of right wing author Maurice Barrés organized by André Breton – the month prior, as well as King's participation in the state rituals at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier that may have been the inspiration for his performance.<sup>256</sup> Like *The Matchbox*, Soupault's portrait diptych reflected his approach to neutering criticism from not just the conservative French art establishment but also extremist political parties through hyperbolic satire.

The dadaists' adversarial relationship with the French far right was longstanding. With their origins in German-speaking Switzerland, international body of members, transnational ethos, suspected Communist leanings, and antipathy to all forms of conventional artistic production, they were repeatedly targeted by fascist political parties, and specifically the *Alliance Française*, a white nationalist activist league.<sup>257</sup> In his

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<sup>256</sup> Marguerite Bonnet, *L'Affaire Barrés: dossier* (Paris: J. Corti/Actual, 1987). See also Matthew Witkovsky, "Dada Breton," *October* 105 (Summer 2003): 125-136.

<sup>257</sup> Davies demonstrates that the AF adheres to three main characteristics of fascist political movements, the most important being its organized militia wing. Peter Davies, *The Extreme Right in France, 1789 to the Present: from de Maistre to le Pen* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

review for *Le Petit Havre*, Jacquemont utilized the language of the *Alliance Française* to describe the group, notably using the derogatory term for foreigners to refer to Tzara.

Dadaism is a simple smokescreen invented by foreigners to ridicule French thought in the eyes of ill-informed passersby. Some *métèques* of Central Europe have come to conquer Paris, associated with young imbeciles thirsty for fame and who, being so little able to distinguish themselves in literature or the arts by natural means, seek to stand out, launching this mystification which some of our colleagues were wrong to noisily advertise.<sup>258</sup>

Jacquemont asserted that the dadaists' public interventions – including the Galerie Montaigne production – were mere publicity stunts whose shock was intended to mask their own creative shortcomings.

According to the *Alliance Française*, dada's position as antithetical to French culture was predicated not only on its avant-garde aesthetics and cosmopolitanism but also its association with Black cultural forms. To take just one example, the December 19, 1921 issue of the journal *Bonsoir* features an article that cites the dadaists as one of the many threats to the nation. The anonymous critic called his compatriots to order: "Citizens, the homeland is in danger, cubism, dadaism, Bolshevism, the coconut, blacks, *métèques* and jazz bands tried to guillotine the French spirit, the French beauty and the eternal *montmartrois* humour!"<sup>259</sup> Here the French spirit, represented by the hilltop

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<sup>258</sup> "Le 'dadaïsme' est une simple fumisterie inventée par des étrangers pour ridiculiser la pensée française aux yeux des passants mal renseignés. [...] Quelques *métèques* de l'Europe centrale venus à la conquête de Paris, associés à des jeunes imbéciles assoiffés de réclame et qui, étant trop nuls pour se distinguer dans la littérature ou dans les arts par des moyens naturels, cherchent à se singulariser, ont lancé cette mystification, à laquelle certains de nos confrères ont eu le tort de faire une publicité tapageuse." Jean Jacquemont, "Chronique Parisienne," *Le Petit Havre*, June 14, 1921. TRZ 684 VII, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

<sup>259</sup> "Citoyens, la patrie est en danger, le cubisme, le dadaïsme, le bolchevisme, la coco, les nègres, les *métèques* et les jazz-bands ont tenté de guillotiner l'esprit français, la beauté française et l'éternel humour *montmartrois*!..." Unidentified critic, *Bonsoir*, December 19, 1921. TZR 864 XII, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.



neighborhood of Montmartre, associated with the artists of the Belle Époque, is perceived to be imperiled as a result of the influence of new practices and theories in the arts and politics, as well as the influx of foreigners, particularly members of the African diaspora. The art critics of *Bonsoir* and *Le Petit Havre* replicated the *Alliance Française*'s derogatory language in their descriptions of Paris dada.

*The Matchbox* thus further solidifies from within this context as Soupault's ill-conceived critique of the mainstream art world as well as of the xenophobic and racist French far right more broadly. Although the French public understood the founding of Liberia by formerly enslaved Americans as a successful instance of Black peoples' forging their independence from white supremacy, in reality, its founders merely deployed the same tools of domination used by Euro-Americans.<sup>260</sup> Indeed, Charles Dunbar Burgess King's administration proposed an assimilationist conception of Liberian national identity as a harmonious integration between the settlers and native populations.<sup>261</sup> In his inaugural speech on January 5, 1920, King pleaded for "a Negro nationality indigenous to the soul, having its foundation rooted in institutions in Africa

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<sup>260</sup> Beginning as a settlement for the American Colonization Society with the support of the United States federal government, the Republic of Liberia declared its independence from the United States on July 26, 1847. The formerly enslaved Afro-American settlers recreated the Southern economic agrarian system and attempted to impose Western values on the indigenous communities. Similarly to the French presence in West Africa, Liberia's early years were characterized by violence between settlers and the indigenous population. Struggling to modernize its economy and infrastructure, Liberia remained vulnerable to other colonizing powers, losing territory to both France and England. Nevertheless, Liberia sided with the Allied Powers during the First World War; its reward was to be the only African nation to join the League of Nations as an independent state. Anjali Mitter Duva, "The Lone Star: The Story of Liberia," *Global Connections*, Public Broadcasting Service, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/globalconnections/liberia/essays/history/>

<sup>261</sup> Just a decade later, in 1931, King resigned his position following an investigation into his administration's policies of forced labor by the League of Nations. Donald Rahl Petterson and Svend E. Holsoe, eds., "Liberia," *Encyclopaedia Britannica* <https://www.britannica.com/place/Liberia/History>

and purified by Western thought and development.”<sup>262</sup> His comments evoke the *évolué*'s position which Soupault exploited in *The Matchbox*, while simultaneously sidestepping the issue of colonization.<sup>263</sup>

While the personal correspondence between Soupault and Tzara shows no evidence that they were aware of King's domestic platform, the choice of the Liberian president for the character of the art critic in *The Matchbox* is compelling within the context of the increasingly contentious public discourse on national identity in mainland France and its colonies, as well as France's redoubled efforts to take over additional areas of Liberia while simultaneously touting it as a model of republican governance.<sup>264</sup> Indeed, no doubt delighted by the irony of a president named King, Soupault may have chosen this particular head of state for the mock-diplomatic visit to the vernissage of the *International Exposition* in order to express the group's critical stance towards democracy following the conclusion of the First World War. The dadaists repeatedly utilized the absurdity of the idea of the avant-garde artist as equally powerful with the highest-ranking official in a representative form of government to render a critique of both the idea of effective democracy and the power of the artist.

The sixth issue of *Dada*, published in Paris in March of 1920, included a list of seventy-six dada participants from all corners of the globe, designated as '*présidents et*

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<sup>262</sup> Brawley.

<sup>263</sup> The group of artists and writers associated with *Littérature* – including Soupault – would become outspoken defenders of independence movements in the French colonies beginning with the uprising in the Rif region of Morocco around 1925. Robert Short, “The Politics of Surrealism, 1920-36,” *Surrealism, Politics, and Culture*, Studies in European Cultural Transition, vol. 16, ed. Raymond Spiteri and Donald LaCoss (Aldershot, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 18-36.

<sup>264</sup> Cassandra Mark-Thiesen, *Mediators, Contract Men, and Colonial Capital: Mechanized Gold Mining in the Gold Coast Colony, 1879-1909* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2018).

*présidentes*' (Fig. 2.10).<sup>265</sup> The last page of the issue showcases Tzara's characteristically ambitious and innovative typography, and includes the phrase, "*Tout le monde est directeur du Mouvement DADA*" alongside the following plea from Tzara for "friends and other things so reproached for their grammatical vocations of the equilibrists in flasks."<sup>266</sup> These grammatical evocations could refer to polylingual expressions – a notable aspect of the poetry and performance at the Cabaret Voltaire discussed elsewhere in this dissertation – emphasizing continuity between Paris and Zurich dada through the weaving together of language, internationalism, and artistic production.

In their Manifesto of the Dada Movement, published collectively in Issue 13 of *Littérature* in May of the same year, the Paris group declared, "All the members of the DADA movement are presidents."<sup>267</sup> Furthermore, the events section of the June 17 issue of *Paris Midi* proffered a public invitation from the "Presidents of Mouvement Dada" to the Galerie Montaigne, highlighting how the press adopted the language favored by the artists themselves.<sup>268</sup> The ubiquity of the term "presidents" as an alternative means of referring to dadaist interlocutors suggests that the Parisian group maintained a healthy skepticism towards democratic institutions.

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<sup>265</sup> Tristan Tzara, *Dada* 6, Paris, February 1920. For analysis of Dada journals see Emily Hage, "The Magazine as Strategy: Tristan Tzara's Dada and the Seminal Role of Dada Art Journals in the Dada Movement," *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 2: 1 (2011): 33–53.

<sup>266</sup> "Nous cherchons des amis et d'autres choses si reprochées aux vocations grammaticales des équilibristes en flacons." Tristan Tzara, *Dada* 6, Paris, February 1920. Translation mine.

<sup>267</sup> André Breton, ed. *Littérature* 13, Paris, 1920.

<sup>268</sup> "Allons-nous enfin savoir le but du Mouvement Dada et pourrions-nous maintenant comprendre les œuvres des dadaïstes ? Les présidents du Mouvement Dada ont décidé de faire à la Galerie Montaigne, 13 avenue Montaigne, le 18 juin à 3 h 30, une conférence au cours de laquelle ils donneront des explications sur ce qu'on appelle leurs élucubrations." Unidentified author, *Paris Midi*, 17 Juin 1921, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

Placing *The Matchbox* within the context of the deployment of the presidential office in Paris dada publications and Soupault's contributions to the *Exposition Internationale* reinforces the idea that his use of blackface was intended to render a double critique of the conservative elements of the French political arena and the art establishment. By playing up the public perception connecting dada to *l'art nègre*, Soupault nevertheless ultimately reified the white supremacist and xenophobic foundations of these institutions. *The Matchbox* thus represents the dadaists' fundamentally flawed approach to critiquing the lowly estimations of both Black art forms and the dadaists' own through satirical use of blackface. Indeed, Soupault's failure falls into sharper relief when placed in contrast to Tzara's contribution to the Soirée Dada. Tzara successfully criticized the pervasive xenophobia and racism of interwar Paris through the mobilization of his own subject position – rather than replicating derogatory projections of another's – through both the analogy of the characters in his play, *The Gas Heart*, and his own voice.

#### Analogical Anatomies in *The Gas Heart*

Whereas in *The Matchbox* the face becomes the site for criticizing artistic and political norms and negotiating identity through racialized burlesque, *The Gas Heart* achieves the same ends through its disassembly and personification. Facial features are treated as constituent and interdependent parts – a change in the form of one, such as a raised eyebrow, renders the person's entire visage differently and suggests mood or character. Tzara chose the face as the site for his play for exactly this reason: the

characters make visible the fact that all cast members contribute to and are codependent upon one another for the enactment of dramatic performance.

Divided into three acts, *The Gas Heart* consists of seemingly nonsensical conversations between six characters: Eye, Mouth, Nose, Ear, Neck, and Eyebrow, as well as the Gas Heart, who is referenced in the staging notes but not associated with any actor.<sup>269</sup> On the evening of June 10, 1921, the play's premiere, Tzara directed his characters (portrayed by the same dadaists who participated in *The Matchbox*) to "enter and exit *ad libitum*," with the exception of Neck and Nose, who were arranged opposite one another on the stage and small balcony in the salon, respectively.<sup>270</sup> Played by Theodor Fraenkel, Nose spoke first, asking, "Hey there, star-scarred man, where are you running?" with Neck, played by Benjamin Péret, responding, "Mandarin and white Spain / I kill Madeleine Madeleine."<sup>271</sup> The ongoing exchanges between the two characters act as a structure for the play: in the second act, Nose and Neck trade the refrains "*oui, je sais*" ("yes, I know") and "*merci, pas mal*" ("thanks, not so bad") back and forth, while the act revolves around variations on the refrain "*tout le monde te connait*" ("everyone knows you"). The interactions between these two characters, considered in relationship to the placement of Fraenkel and Péret within the Galerie Montaigne space, represent a humorous application of the English metaphors of "sticking one's neck out" and "sticking

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<sup>269</sup> Tristan Tzara, "*Le Cœur à gaz*," *Tristan Tzara: Dada est tatou, Tout est Dada*, ed. Henri Behar (Paris: Flammarion, 2016), 107-134.

<sup>270</sup> The text lists the following dadaists as characters: Philippe Soupault (Oreille), G. Ribemont-Dessaignes (Bouche), Théodore Fraenkel (Nez), Louis Aragon (Oeil), Benjamin Peret (Cou), and Tristan Tzara (Sourcil). The stage directions read, "COU est au-dessus de la scène, NEZ vis-à-vis, au-dessus du public. Tous les autres personnages entrent et sortent ad libitum." Tristan Tzara, "Dadyl. Version définitive," TZR 3 – *Le Cœur à gaz*, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

<sup>271</sup> "NEZ: Hé là-bas, l'homme aux cicatrice d'étoiles, où courez-vous ? COU: Mandarine et blanc d'Espagne / je me tue Madeleine Madeleine." TZR 3 – *Le Cœur à gaz*, "Dadyl. Version définitive" Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

one's nose in" to the artistic endeavor. Additionally, the ostensible meaninglessness of the other characters' speech – and Mouth's continual exit and re-entry – reflects Tzara's understanding of the arbitrariness of linguistic structures and invokes his earlier notion that "thought is made in the mouth."<sup>272</sup>

As in *The Matchbox* and Soupault's contributions to the *Exposition Internationale*, the form and content of Tzara's play incorporated the audience into the dada's criticism. The Salon Dada attendees represent the mind belonging to the body invoked by *The Gas Heart*, given their role as meaning-makers within a conventional theatrical or conversational setting.<sup>273</sup> The dadaists' skepticism of effective democratic governance and the international order following the conclusion of the First World War evoked in the central character for *The Matchbox* is furthered in *The Gas Heart*, with the dismemberment of the face recalling the prevalence of veterans with facial deformities as a result of the violence of trench warfare.<sup>274</sup>

The face remained a continual source of inspiration for Tzara, evidenced in his notebooks and folders held at the Bibliothèque-Littéraire Jacques Doucet: depictions of the face recur obsessively in varying styles – from cubist to cartoonish, from abstracted masks to mimetic portraits. As just one example, pages 36a and b of his 1921 notebook

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<sup>272</sup> For discussion of the impact of Tzara's status as a non-native speaker in his Manifesto of Feeble Love and Bitter Love, see Adrian Sudhalter, "Tristan Tzara, Literary Montage, Dadaglobe," *Before Publication : Montage in Art, Architecture, and Book Design*, ed. Nanni Baltzer and Martino Stierli (Zurich: Park Books, 2016), 45-47.

<sup>273</sup> Robert Varisco, "Anarchy and Resistance in Tristan Tzara's 'The Gas Heart'" *Modern Drama* 40: 1 (1997): 139-148.

<sup>274</sup> Stanton Garner, "'The Gas Heart': Disfigurement and the Dada Body," *Modern Drama* 50: 4 (2007): 500-516.

contain notes for *The Gas Heart* with nine sketches of faces alone (Fig. 2.11).<sup>275</sup> On the right-hand page of the spread, Tzara drew a double-faced bust of a man: his head resembles a Venn diagram in two registers of light and dark with a single set of upper facial features, namely the eyebrow, eye, moustache, but two noses and mouths; he wears a suit and bowtie. The figure recalls Soupault's costume for *The Matchbox*, while the adjacent phrase, "the electorates and the magistrates," further connects the sketch to issues of representative democracy.<sup>276</sup>

"Africa" was present as a conceptual category in Tzara's mind as he prepared the script of *The Gas Heart* for the Galerie Montaigne, even if it was not present in the subject matter of his play. On the same page of his notebook, Tzara sketched a visage reminiscent of the first African artwork he ever acquired, a mask now in the collections of the Musée du quai Branly by an unidentified artist from present day Côte d'Ivoire (Fig. 2.12). This face shares the facial hair and hairstyle of the mask as well as the pronounced vertical line down its centre and almond-shaped eye sockets. Although African sculptures were not included in the exhibition at the Galerie Montaigne, this sketch suggests the way in which African art may have been present in Tzara's mind as he prepared the text for *The Gas Heart*, as well as collaborated with his friends to plan the June 10 program of performances for the Soirée Dada at the Galerie Montaigne.

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<sup>275</sup> Tristan Tzara, Carnet de notes: *L'Homme approximatif et Le Cœur à gaz*, TZR 663, page 36, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

<sup>276</sup> "les électorats et les magistrats / les croquets-mots / les rococos et les rébarcadés du gateage / avec leurs valises du salive" Tristan Tzara, Carnet de notes: *L'Homme approximatif et Le Cœur à gaz*, TZR 663, page 36, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

### Tzara's Pronunciation of Alterity in *The Gas Heart*

Just as Soupault's blackface performance for *The Matchbox* was intended to solicit audience participation in order to exploit and to point to biases towards those of African descent, so did Tzara orchestrate a provocation in *The Gas Heart* in response to the rising nationalist sentiment of interwar Paris. While scholars have discussed the tumult at the premiere in terms of the play's content, the audience's response was, in fact, precipitated by the playwright himself, and resulted in the pre-emptive end to the evening.<sup>277</sup> Jacquemont reported that:

But here is the end. This is a piece entitled: *The Gas Heart*. Its author, a very handsome young Romanian, Tristan Tzara, comes to read a paper presentation. From the first sentence, his foreign accent causes new protests. We shout at him: To Potsdam! Go and learn French! And as Tzara, unperturbed, affirms that his piece is a masterpiece, an immense laughter covers the rest of his speech. It's finished. We will not understand another word of this comedy where the characters are: the ear, the mouth, the nose, the eye, the neck and the eyebrow. In any case, it's an astounding style.<sup>278</sup>

According to Jacquemont, Tzara's French pronunciation – long rolling “r's” and clipped vowels – marked him as a non-native speaker, precipitating the audience's ire.

Fanon's comments on the importance of language acquisition for cultural competency for the *évolué* again seem relevant in his observation that, “To speak means being able to use a certain syntax and possessing the morphology of such and such a

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<sup>277</sup> Dachy, Hentea.

<sup>278</sup> “Mais voici la fin. C'est une pièce ayant pour titre: Le Cœur à gaz. Son auteur, un jeune Roumain fort beau, Tristan Tzara, vient lire un papier de présentation. Des la première phrase, son accent étranger provoque de nouvelles protestations. On lui crie: A Potsdam! Va donc apprendre le français! Et comme Tzara, imperturbable, affirme que sa pièce est un chef-d'œuvre, un rire immense couvre la suite de son discours. C'est fini. On n'entendra pas un mot de cette comédie dont les personnages sont: l'oreille, la bouche, le nez, l'œil, le cou et le sourcil. D'ailleurs, c'est d'un style ahurissant.” Jean Jacquemont, “Chronique Parisienne,” *Le Petit Havre*, June 14, 1921. TRZ 684 VII, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.



language, but it means above all assuming a culture and bearing the weight of a civilization.”<sup>279</sup> While the black colonial subject can utilize language as a tool to try to ameliorate her inferior position within the racialized hierarchy of French society, at the premiere of *The Gas Heart*, Tzara’s speech becomes the primary site of his marginality. Tzara, although of European descent, remained outside of French culture as both an ethnically Jewish person and a non-native speaker: by laughing at him, the audience rejected his claim to participation.<sup>280</sup> *The Gas Heart* thus differs in one essential way from *The Matchbox*: Tzara used his own body, while Soupault conjured and ventriloquized another’s.

Tzara’s opening monologue for *The Gas Heart* was not the first time that he highlighted the absurdity of the French far right with his very person. Indeed, he chose a speech by Léon Daudet, co-editor of *L’Action Française* (the press organ of the *Alliance Française*) for his now infamous instructions on how to make a dada poem, which he performed for the ‘First Thursday at *Littérature*’ on January 23, 1920.<sup>281</sup> By asserting that the resulting work of art would represent the author, Tzara leveled a pointed criticism of

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<sup>279</sup> Fanon, 21.

<sup>280</sup> The intricacies of Tzara’s poetry, which straddled French and Romanian, have been positioned as evidence of his conflicted stance towards French culture. Laura Ceia-Minjares, “Chapter 1 – Opting-In, Opting-Out: The Radical Melancholy of the Margin, or Tristan Tzara Places a Double Bet,” *The Avant-Garde and the Margin: New Territories of Modernism*, ed. Sanja Bamun-Radunovic and Marinos Pourgouris (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2006), 1-25. Cosana Eram, “Lost in Translation,” *Dada/Surrealism* 20:1 (2015): 1-26. Steven Forcer, “Before They Were Famous: Tristan Tzara, Nationhood, and Poetry,” *Paris - Bucharest, Bucharest - Paris - Francophone Writers from Romania* (Amsterdam: Brill, 2012), 71–94. Marius Hentea, “On the Outskirts of Modernity: Tristan Tzara and Dada in Romania,” *Modernist Cultures* 8:2 (2013): 215-231. Milly Heyd, “Tristan Tzara / Shmuel Rosenstock: The Hidden/Overt Jewish Agenda,” *Jewish Dimensions in Modern Visual Culture: Antisemitism, Assimilation, Affirmation* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2010), 193–219. Corina Jordache-Martin, “‘Le venu de Zurich’ or Tristan Tzara and the Insolence of the Margin,” *Centennial Review* 42:3 (Fall 1998): 569-588. Indubitably, Tzara’s Jewish ancestry impacted his life in numerous ways. For one of the most recent analyses of the intersections of anti-Semitism and imperialism in the French Third Republic see Dorian Bell, *Globalizing Race: Antisemitism and Empire in French and European Culture* (Northwestern University Press, 2018).

<sup>281</sup> Hentea, *Tata Dada: The Real Life and Celestial Adventures of Tristan Tzara*, 160.

Daudet's vituperative description of foreigners, such as himself. Like the attendees of the Soirée Dada at the Galerie Montaigne a year and a half later, the audience at the Palais des Fêtes responded, as poet Louis Aragon recollected, to Tzara's French pronunciation, rather than the content of his performance.<sup>282</sup>

Furthermore, just one month prior to the Soirée Dada at the Galerie Montaigne, Tzara had explicitly positioned himself as the antithesis of Barrès in his testimony during the mock trial held at the Salle des Sociétés des Savantes organised by Breton.<sup>283</sup> In *Revue des Œuvres Nouvelles* published in the fall following the Galerie Montaigne exhibition, Louis Peltier recalled, "Who is Tristan Tzara? He has defined himself: he is the opposite of Maurice Barrès."<sup>284</sup> Tzara deliberately drew attention to himself as the target of the far right through his spoken words on three separate occasions, rendering a criticism of the xenophobic tenor of French public discourse through absurdity.

Tzara's active feeding of his public perception as the foreign-born impresario of dada, satirizing the gatekeepers of French culture, confirms that the dadaists were deploying a strategy of provocative personification in the overall Galerie Montaigne production.<sup>285</sup> While no transcript of Tzara's remarks of the evening of June 10, 1921 exists, the opening paragraph of the manuscript for *The Gas Heart's* marked final version in the poet's archives closely corresponds to what Jacquemont described. Tzara deployed

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<sup>282</sup> Louis Aragon, *Projet d'histoire littéraire contemporaine*, ed. Marc Dachy (Paris: Gallimard, 1994).

<sup>283</sup> Elizabeth Legge, "Faire de Son Histoire Un Boucle (Noire): Ways of Looking at Tristan Tzara," *Art History* 32: 1 (2009): 144-176.

<sup>284</sup> "Tristan Tzara est venu. Soit. Qu'est-ce que Tristan Tzara? Il s'est définie lui-même: c'est le contraire de Maurice Barrès." Louis Peltier, *Revue des Œuvres Nouvelles*, Octobre 1921. TZR 684 VII, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

<sup>285</sup> See also Roger Vitrac and Tristan Tzara, "Tristan Tzara va cultiver ses vices," *Journal du Peuple*, April 14, 1923. TZR 684 IX, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

the same dada technique as Soupault's portrait series, namely insult, in order to further incite the audience.

The Gas Heated Heart advances, great circulation, it is the only and biggest swindle of the century in three acts, it will bring happiness only to the industrial idiots who believe in the existence of geniuses. The performers are asked to give this piece the attention due to a masterpiece of the force of *Macbeth* and *Chanticleer*, but to treat the writer, who is not a genius, with little respect, and to notice the lack of seriousness of the text which brings no novelty to theatrical technique.<sup>286</sup>

Tzara's speech is a tongue in cheek disavowal of the new type of performance the dadaists were attempting to implement, namely one in which the audience is incorporated into the work of art itself. This absurdist commentary preempts the audience's rejection by dismissing those who presume to understand the work, which, he asserted, was a farce.

Tzara's opening monologue for *The Gas Heart* emerges as a deliberate deployment of the auditory sign of his marginalization in order to point to the absurdity of the xenophobic discourse that labelled him as such. In other words, Tzara transformed his socio-political vulnerability into an aesthetic tool to further underscore the way in which language – both spoken and written – fundamentally structures our understanding of the world in both its syntax and its sociality. Intriguingly, Soupault's use of the phrase "très charmant" in *The Matchbox* references Tzara's depiction of himself as "charming" in the transcript of his performance at Galerie Povlovsky on December 19,

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<sup>286</sup> "Le Coeur chauffé au gaz marche lentement, grande circulation, c'est la seule et la plus grande escroquerie du siècle en 3 actes, elle ne portera bonheur qu'aux imbéciles industrialisés qui croient à l'existence des génies. Les interprètes sont priés de donner à cette pièce l'attention due à une chef-d'œuvre de la force de *Macbeth* et *Chanticleer*, mais de traiter l'auteur qui n'est pas un génie, avec peu de respect et de constater le manque de sérieux du texte qui n'apporte aucune nouveauté sur la technique du théâtre." Tristan Tzara, "Dadyl. Version définitive," TZR 3 – *Le Cœur à gaz*, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

1920 that was printed in April 1921 issue of *La Vie des lettres*. While Soupault may have intended to draw attention to the way in which his dadaist confrère was racialized within French cultural circles, the meaning of this phrase – like his deployment of blackface – remains ambiguous, and could also be read as straightforward mockery of the dada founder. In contrast to Soupault’s failure with *The Matchbox*, which reifies the racism which it intends to lampoon, Tzara’s deliberate deployment of insult in his own voice is an effective tool for criticizing the increasingly-pervasive xenophobia in France at this moment.

The Soirée Dada’s conclusion reinforces this interpretation. Returning to Jacquemont’s account yet again, we learn what happened after the heckling:

Suddenly, in the middle of the uproar, someone calls for Joliboit. Immediately the porcelain repairer comes forward and attacks [the piano with] *La Marseillaise*. Everyone stands, crying, leaving the “Dadaistes” amongst the disorderly chairs to finish *The Gas Heart*, masterpiece of Tzara the Romanian “dada.”<sup>287</sup>

The local porcelain repairman and amateur pianist diffused the melee caused by Tzara’s opening monologue for *The Gas Heart* by playing the French national anthem, precipitating their exit seemingly *en masse*. While no evidence as yet can ascertain that Tzara was the anonymous “person” who summoned Joliboit to the stage, it is clear that the choice of concluding song for the premiere performance at the Galerie Montaigne was prearranged. The group thus lampooned the solemnity of another national ritual, similarly to the parodic translation of the diplomatic ceremony at the Tomb of the

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<sup>287</sup> “Tout à coup, au milieu du tapage, quelqu’un réclame Joliboit. Aussitôt le réparateur de porcelaine présente et attaque la Marseillaise. Tout le monde se lève et s’en va en criant, laissant les ‘dadaistes’ achever devant les chaises en désordre le Cœur à Gaz, chef-d’œuvre Tzara le ‘dada’ roumain.” Jean Jacquemont, “Chronique Parisienne,” *Le Petit Havre*, June 14, 1921. TRZ 684 VII, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

Unknown Soldier into the *vernissage* of a dada exhibition by a president of African descent. While in both *The Matchbox* and *The Gas Heart* the physical sounds and shapes of the performer were deployed to signal alterity, the former was manufactured and the latter authentic. Tzara and Soupault thus exploited the biases – whether feigned or actual – of the Champs-Élysées Theatre audience in order to level a criticism of political and aesthetic conservatism in interwar French society.

### Conclusion

From the blackface masquerade in *The Matchbox*, to the mirrored and metamorphosized body in the *Salon Dada, Exposition Internationale*, to the fractured face in *The Gas Heart*, the Soirée Dada of June 10, 1921 drew attention to the arbitrariness of prevailing aesthetic and socio-political categories. Comparing the press coverage of the audience's reception of Soupault's masquerade with Tzara's prefatory remarks to *The Gas Heart* further illuminates the ways in which the dadaists deliberately exploited the complex dynamics of race and nationality at the Galerie Montaigne. When placed alongside the dadaists' other interventions at the Galerie Montaigne and in their publications, Soupault's blackface performance emerges as a seriously flawed attempt to call into question racial essentialism and deeply entrenched biases.

One artwork from the *Exposition Internationale* remains a mystery, its title, purpose and authors still unknown, and its existence registered only through its appearance in photographic reproduction, the negatives held today in the Roger-Viollet archives (Fig. 2.13). The sculpture consists of a dark coloured mask, triangular torso adorned with pseudo-military regalia and one arm with an elongated hand. Perched on a

music stand, the figure is adorned with paper print depicting a man with angry eyes, his mouth covered with a handkerchief emblazoned with the word “dada” in all capital letters. With its gaping mouth, empty stare, and precarious stance, the object epitomizes the suturing together of various vectors of alterity taken up by the dadaists for the June 10 production at the Galerie Montaigne – and all that remains still to uncover.

### CHAPTER 3 - *Dépaysement*: Tristan Tzara's Phenomenology of the Object between Surrealism and Ethnography

In 1931, *Cahiers d'art* published an essay by Tzara entitled, "Pasted Paper, or the Proverb in Painting (*Le papier collé ou le proverbe en peinture*).” In this text, he located the aesthetic power of papier collé in its integration of quotidian materials into painting and drawing. Tzara described this process as analogous to a development in contemporary poetry in which certain poets had begun to disrupt the conventions of their medium by deploying the commonplace adage. Tzara believed the intrusion of everyday materials such as newspaper into a fine art form like painting, similarly to the insertion of units of speech into written poetry, produced a shock, revealing the nature of thought itself. He asserts, “A form cut out of a newspaper and integrated into a drawing or painting encloses the commonplace, the scrap of daily, ordinary reality in relation to the reality constructed by the mind.”<sup>288</sup> His essay's concluding sentence is a tour de force:

In its many different guises, the pasted paper signals the most poetic and revolutionary moment in the history of painting, a moving aspiration towards more viable hypotheses, a greater intimacy with daily realities, an invincible affirmation of the ephemeral and of temporal and perishable materials, the sovereignty of thought.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Tristan Tzara, “The Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting,” *The Surrealists Look at Art*, ed. Pontus Hulten, trans. Michael Taylor and Norma Cole (Venice, CA: Lapis Press, 1990), 218-219.

<sup>289</sup> Tzara, “The Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting,” 220. Although Taylor and Cole refer to daily realities in their translation of the essay, Tzara utilizes the word ‘truths’ to describe the insights into the everyday facilitated by papier collé. “Le papier collé, sous tant de différents aspects, marque dans l'évolution de la peinture, le moment le plus poétique, le plus révolutionnaire, le touchant essor vers de hypothèses plus viables, une plus grande intimité avec *les vérités quotidiennes*, l'affirmation invincible du provisoire et des matières temporelles et périssables, la souveraineté de la pensée.” Tristan Tzara, “Le Papier Collé ou le proverbe en peinture,” *Cahiers d'art* (Paris, 1931): 64. Emphasis mine.

Situating collage at the developmental endpoint of avant-garde painting, Tzara's choice of words reflects his engagement with debates among the various surrealist factions about the agency of art objects and human perception.<sup>290</sup>

Tzara's theory of collage was predicated on his longstanding interest in artworks from Africa, the Americas, and the Pacific Islands that he believed not only shared, but had facilitated, the development of innovation in European art. The introduction to the catalogue of the exhibition held at the Pigalle Theater that he co-organized with the dealers Charles Ratton and Pierre Loeb just one year prior to the publication of his essay in *Cahiers d'art* states so explicitly.<sup>291</sup> In this text, the authors note that,

If it is still too early to determine their great influence on painting and sculpture in the last twenty-five years, we can state that contemporary art has accustomed us [to African and Oceanic works], by a kind of shocking return to forms which, a few years ago, appeared extravagant and barbarous.<sup>292</sup>

In other words, Tzara and his co-organizers felt that visitors to the Pigalle exhibition were prepared for the encounter with sculpture from sub-Saharan African and the Pacific Islands because of their familiarity with avant-garde art, itself inspired by these objects.

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<sup>290</sup> Specifically Tzara was in conversation with the poet Louis Aragon and the critic Carl Einstein surrounding the 1930 collage exhibition held at the Galerie Goemans. See *Exposition de collages: Arp, Braque, Dali, Duchamp, Ernst, Gris, Mirò, Magritte, Man-Ray, Picabia, Picasso, Tanguy: mars 1930* (Paris: Galerie Goemans, 1930).

<sup>291</sup> In a letter to MoMA curator James Johnson Sweeney dated January 5, 1935, Charles Ratton emphasized Tzara's role in the project: "Ci-joint le catalogue de l'exp. Pigalle que nous avons rédigé avec Tzara et dont j'avais fait la préface (je vous le dis car nos noms ont été intentionnellement oubliés). Ceci est mon exemplaire de travail et il contient quelques notes dont vous pourrez peut-être vous servir, notamment en ce qui concerne les propriétaires successifs." While Ratton took full authorial credit for the preface in his correspondence with Sweeney, Ratton's desire to advance his commercial interests cannot be discounted. More importantly, the language of the 1930 essay strongly evokes Tzara's inimitable rhetoric. Charles Ratton to James Johnson Sweeney, January 5, 1935, Museum of Modern Art archives, folder 39.9, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

<sup>292</sup> "S'il est encore trop tôt pour préciser leur très grande influence sur la peinture et la sculpture de ces vingt-cinq dernières années, nous pouvons constater que l'art d'aujourd'hui nous a accoutumés, par une sorte de choc en retour, à des formes qui eussent paru, il y a peu d'années, extravagantes et barbares." Tristan Tzara and Charles Ratton, *Exposition d'art africain et d'art océanien* (Paris: Galerie Pigalle, 1930), 5. Translation mine.



In “Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting,” Tzara synthesized contemporary understandings of the manufacture of objects from Africa with surrealist poetic theory, applying his framework to avant-garde artists working in collage. Although emerging from the crucible of French colonialism, ethnographic study of early twentieth-century African material cultures demonstrated that these works were the products of knowledgeable practitioners who transformed everyday materials into assemblages with energies capable of effecting spiritual and social change within a community. Tzara recognized the material heterogeneity characteristic of power objects termed *minkisi* and *boliv* as related to the use of multiple materials in collage. Although Tzara did not use Indigenous terminology to refer to these objects, his related 1933 essay entitled “A Certain Automatism of Taste (*Un Certain automatisme du gout*)” published in *Minotaure*, demonstrates his familiarity with contemporary ethnographic theory. In his essay on papier collé, he drew on current understandings of the epistemologies undergirding the manufacture of these artworks to articulate an analogous phenomenology of visual apprehension with social impact for European collage.

My examination of this moment in Tzara’s career, a full decade after the Salon Dada exhibition and performance, highlights the essential role of African thought systems – albeit filtered through the distorting lens of colonial anthropology – in the formation of contemporary European aesthetics and their historicization in modernist studies. Longstanding misapprehensions of the complexity of sub-Saharan epistemologies, crystallized in the theory of fetishism traced back to French Enlightenment philosopher Charles de Brosses, have recently re-emerged in new theoretical vogues such as Jane

Bennett’s “vibrant materialism” and Bill Brown’s “thing theory.”<sup>293</sup> Tzara’s analysis of collage laid out in the 1931 issue of *Cahiers d’art*, underexamined until now, centers the agency of both makers and viewers in ways that align with the innovative approaches employed by the first generation of Africanist art historians Douglas Fraser, Robert Farris Thompson, and Roy Sieber trained in the United States.<sup>294</sup> Subsequent generations of scholars, notably Z.S. Strother and her students, Susan E. Gagliardi and Babatunde Lawal, similarly blend anthropological fieldwork’s attention to the experiential aspects of research with the central tools of art history, namely connoisseurship and iconographic analysis.<sup>295</sup> I contend that Tzara’s 1931 essay not only prefigures contemporary Africanist art historical approaches, but also stands as a valuable example of how these methodologies can be generatively applied to other artistic traditions and forms, and particularly those of the European avant-gardes.

#### Between Words and Images: Bretonian Surrealism and the Galerie Goemans Exhibition

In the years between 1929 and 1931, avant-garde artists, writers, and critics attempted to define collage’s relationship to the movements that had proliferated since its introduction into twentieth-century European art around 1912 by Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso. Although collages were publicly shown in galleries in the years

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<sup>293</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010). Bill Brown, *Other Things* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2015).

<sup>294</sup> Monni Adams, “African Visual Arts from an Art Historical Perspective,” *African Studies Review* 31: no. 2 (September 1989): 55-103.

<sup>295</sup> Susan E. Gagliardi, *Senufo Unbound: Dynamics of Art and Identity in West Africa* (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art; Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2014). Babatunde Lawal, *The Gèlèdè Spectacle: Art, Gender, and Social Harmony in an African Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996). Z.S. Strother, *Inventing Masks: Agency and History in the Art of the Central Pende* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

immediately following the conclusion of the First World War, there was no display devoted solely to the medium until André Breton, Louis Aragon, and Paul Éluard organized an exhibition at the Galerie Goemans in Paris in 1930.<sup>296</sup> Following a schism resulting in the formation of the so-called dissident surrealist group led by Georges Bataille and Michel Leiris, the *Exposition de collages* aimed to connect the Bretonian surrealists' recent endeavors in collage with historical precedents, and to define their objects of study and manufacture.<sup>297</sup> Tzara positioned his 1931 essay for *Cahiers d'art* as a direct response to Louis Aragon's prefatory remarks for the Galerie Goemans exhibition, although his text must also be understood within the context of surrealist texts from the decade prior.<sup>298</sup>

In an essay accompanying Max Ernst's first solo exhibition in 1921 at the Sans Pareil bookstore located in Paris's sixteenth arrondissement, Breton had postulated that Ernst's artworks engendered a disorienting spark, ignited by bringing together "two distant realities."

But the marvelous, without departing from the field of our experience, gathers two distant realities and their coming together ignites a spark; to put within the reach of our senses abstract figures summoned at the same intensity, with the same relief as the others; and, by depriving us of a

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<sup>296</sup> Parisian exhibition precedents including collage include "Exposition Max Ernst," (Paris: Au Sans Pareil, May 3 – June 3, 1921). "Exposition Hans Arp," (Paris: Galerie Surréaliste, November 21 – December 9, 1927).

<sup>297</sup> Alessandro Nigro, "Notes on Surrealist Collage: Between Mixed Media and Polysemy," *Collage/Collages from Cubism to New Dada*, ed. M.M. Lamberti, M.G. Messina (Milan: Electa, 2007), 283-4.

<sup>298</sup> Louis Aragon, "La Peinture au défi," *Exposition de collages: Arp, Braque, Dali, Duchamp, Ernst, Gris, Mirò, Magritte, Man-Ray, Picabia, Picasso, Tanguy: mars 1930* (Paris: Galerie Goemans, 1930), repr. in *The Surrealists Look at Art*, ed. Pontus Hulten, trans. Michael Taylor and Norma Cole (Venice, CA: Lapis Press, 1990). Hulten translates Aragon's essay as "The Challenge to Painting," but I am utilizing Christine Poggi's translation. See Christine Poggi, "Introduction," *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism and the Invention of Collage* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

reference system, estranges [*dépayser*] us from our own memory; this is what temporarily restrains it.<sup>299</sup>

Breton mobilized the metaphor of sculpture to describe the way in which the work of art precipitates a disorientation. The disorientation wrought by the wrenching away from remembered referents is in fact also a deterritorialization: in French the term *dépaysement* refers to the feeling of discomfort resulting from being outside one's own country.

Breton's notion of the irruption of the marvelous into everyday life would be central to surrealist discourse in the coming decade, appearing in the first manifesto published three years later. Although his ideas were initially fomented by the startling juxtapositions in Ernst's paintings and collages, Breton makes no distinction between the images conjured by poetry and visual representations: "SURREALISM, n. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express – verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner – the actual functioning of thought."<sup>300</sup> Five years later, he explicitly articulated an equivalence between the plastic and literary arts in the second manifesto, claiming, "Most certainly, the same goes for literary or artistic output as for any intellectual phenomenon, in that the only question one can rightly raise concerning it is that of the sovereignty of thought."<sup>301</sup> By 1929 then, Breton was increasingly concerned with the similarities between artistic forms utilizing words and

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<sup>299</sup> "Mais la faculté merveilleuse, sans sortir du champ de notre expérience, d'atteindre deux réalités distantes et de leur rapprochement de tire rune étincelle; de mettre à la portée de nos sens des figures abstraites appelées à la même intensité, au même relief que les autres; et, en nous privant de système de référence, de nous dépayser en notre propre souvenir, voilà qui provisoirement le retient." André Breton, "La mise sous whiskey marin se fait en crème kaki & en cinq anatomies, vive le sport Max Ernst," *Exposition Dada Max Ernst* (Paris: Au Sans Pareil, 1921), 1-2. Translation mine. Available electronically International Dada Archive, University of Iowa.

<sup>300</sup> André Breton, "Surrealist Manifesto, 1924," trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane, *Manifestos of Surrealism* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 26.

<sup>301</sup> André Breton, "Second Manifesto of Surrealism, 1929," trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane, *Manifestos of Surrealism* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 154.

images. The exhibition of collages the following year marked the first of several investigations into the fundamental character and material manifestation of surrealist objects in these terms.

In his remarks in the publication for the Galerie Goemans exhibition, Aragon aligned himself explicitly with Breton and his circle, utilizing his terminology to state parenthetically that, “Surreality, moreover, will be a function of or will towards estrangement [*dépaysement*] of everything.”<sup>302</sup> Aragon identifies collage as “surrealism’s activity in our time,” noting the absence of critical response to its efflorescence.<sup>303</sup> In contrast, “Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting” presents Tzara’s highly nuanced and perhaps even circumspect response to Bretonian surrealism. His most direct citation is undoubtedly the use of the term “sovereignty” from the second Surrealist Manifesto to describe papier collé as the epitome of artistic endeavor in the concluding sentence of his essay cited above. However, Tzara’s understanding of the relationship between words and images and collage’s role within this matrix marks a subtle but nevertheless significant departure from either Breton’s or Aragon’s frameworks. As I demonstrate below, Tzara’s theory of collage presents a phenomenology of universalized poetics, attentive to both the symbolic and material dimensions of human experience structured through language and objects. His complex theory stems from his long-held investments in African material cultures and the field of ethnographic study, discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation.

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<sup>302</sup> Louis Aragon quoting André Breton, “The Challenge to Painting,” 51. See André Breton, “Note to the Reader,” *La Femme 100 têtes* (Chartres, France: Éditions du Carrefour, 1929).

<sup>303</sup> Aragon, “The Challenge to Painting,” 52.

## A Picture of Language: Diagramming Collage in “The Proverb in Painting”

Tzara begins his analysis of collage in his 1931 essay for *Cahiers d'art* with an account of the development of human communication. He states that we have no real understanding of how language originated or of the processes by which written language passes from the textual sign to voice, and from voice to thought, in what appears to be an “organic” form of translation, as seemingly spontaneous as the gesture that accompanies speech.<sup>304</sup> Tzara maintains that after writing transcended its status as a mere tool for conveying information, it became further differentiated from its aural model, eventually acquiring individualization through the manipulations of the common code of grammar.<sup>305</sup> It is in poetic style, or individually expressive form, Tzara claims, that “we discover the most daring efforts to pry words from their too solid shell, to divert them from their habitual direction by grafting on a new meaning.”<sup>306</sup> Although outside the scope of this dissertation, Tzara was undoubtedly thinking of not only himself and his surrealist colleagues, but also his symbolist predecessors, most notably the French poet Stéphane Mallarmé and Comte de Lautréamont.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> “That written language, after thousands of years of habits embedded in human faculties as yet unexplored, could seem to us, in its passage from the sign to the voice and from the voice to thought, as organic as gesture which accompanies speech, is a phenomenon concerning which we possess very little information. The will to express oneself and the impulse which discovers ingenious forms, both gestural and aural, permitting individual nuance, will remain as mysterious as all research of whatever origin in the phenomena of life.” Tzara, “The Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting,” 218.

<sup>305</sup> “Since the time writing transcended the purely utilitarian stage, written language has become very different from its spoken model. The conventions crystallized in a common code – grammar – have been expanded by the individual contribution of style.” Tzara, “The Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting,” 218.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Trevor Stark, *Total Expansion of the Letter: Avant-Garde Art and Language After Mallarmé* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020). The circle of surrealists surrounding Breton notoriously drew inspiration from Comte de Lautréamont’s 1869 book *Les Chants de Maldoror* and the following phrase in particular: “Beau comme la rencontre fortuite sur une table de dissection d’une machine à coudre et d’un

Tzara identifies radical juxtaposition as the primary mechanism of poetic innovation. He writes, “Through the strange process of a *shock*, a word placed beside another according to a secret associative meaning, in no way controllable by known modes of investigation, can trigger a poetic emotion among certain particularly sensitive or experienced readers.”<sup>308</sup> In other words, Tzara defined poetry as discernible in the arrangement of words in unusual constellations that bring forth new meanings.

Tzara next established an analogy between recent poetry, rendered strange by insertions of “the commonplace,” including entire units of spoken language, and what he terms *papier collé*. While he does not define the medium explicitly in his text, the thirty-two artworks reproduced throughout the *Cahiers d’art* text feature a variety of materials. Of these, more than three quarters were produced between 1912 and 1917, considered the genesis period of the form. While scholars such as Brigid Doherty, Hal Foster, and Maud Lavin have specified that the inclusion of photographic imagery—in photocollage and photomontage—was the dadaists’ and surrealists’ contribution to the development of collage, Tzara chose to omit these two forms from his essay for *Cahiers d’art*.<sup>309</sup> Indeed, Tzara’s choice of artworks employing multiple materials, and not solely the homogeneity of paper on paper associated with photomontage and *papier collé* today, suggests that he

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parapluie.” Comte de Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1899.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/12005/12005-h/12005-h.htm>

<sup>308</sup> Tzara, “The Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting,” 218. Italics original.

<sup>309</sup> Brigid Doherty, “‘See: We Are All Neurasthenics!’ or, The Trauma of Dada Montage,” *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 1 (Autumn 1997): 82-132. Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993). Maud Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: the Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

held a simultaneously broad and specific definition of the medium which, for the purposes of clarity, I will hereafter refer to as collage.<sup>310</sup>

Like Tzara, Aragon did not differentiate *papier collé* from collage; however, he distinguished between elements within a given composition on the basis of their referential and material functions.<sup>311</sup> Alluding to the first *papiers collés* by Braque and Picasso, he observes that, “From those first works issue two utterly distinct categories of work, one where the element pasted on is valued for its form, or more precisely for its representation of the object, and the other where it is employed for its material.”<sup>312</sup> Extending Aragon’s idea, Tzara asserts the superiority of collage over language.

Of recent poetry that includes interpolated elements of ordinary speech, he observes that, “Since, however, the material is the same, and the clash occurs in the same realm, that of written language, this operation fails to transgress the boundaries of an intellectual convention which quickly establishes itself.”<sup>313</sup> In other words, for Tzara, poetic operations fail to reach the same level of estrangement or *dépaysement* as collage because of the former’s homogeneity.

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<sup>310</sup> William Rubin distinguished between *papier collé* and collage in order to differentiate the accomplishments of Georges Braque from his cubist co-founder Pablo Picasso. See William Rubin, “Picasso and Braque: An Introduction,” *Picasso and Braque: Pioneering Cubism* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1989), particularly pages 30–41. Additionally, the distinction between collage and assemblage merits further consideration but falls outside the scope of the current discussion. For a compelling analysis of the dialogues between surrealist assemblages and African objects see Julia Kelly, “The Anthropology of Assemblage,” *Art Journal* 67: no. 1 (Spring 2008): 24–30.

<sup>311</sup> “I would like to speak of what for simplicity’s sake is called collage, even though the use of paste [colle] is only one characteristic of this procedure, and not even an essential one.” Aragon, “The Challenge to Painting,” 52.

<sup>312</sup> Aragon, “The Challenge to Painting,” 54.

<sup>313</sup> Tzara, “The Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting,” 218.



Tzara thus prioritizes collage over poetry because of the former's ability to embrace material heterogeneity.

While Aragon dismissed attempts to historicize collage, Tzara situated the medium's innovation firmly within the struggle against convention among European artists in the first two decades of the twentieth century.<sup>314</sup> He asserts, with characteristic verve,

A handful of seekers after new horizons no longer raised barriers between poetry and painting, and in every area broke away from what, with shame, they still called art: established genres, ridiculous excrescences of rules born from a tradition of impotence, genres which came to be ends in themselves, shapeless tumors with dead souls.<sup>315</sup>

Tzara thus postulated a shared method of working between poets and visual artists, and a common desire to break down the barriers between their mediums.

Tzara maintains that collage's tactile disjunctions generate an embodied experience that surpasses that of poetry: "The difference among materials, which the eye is capable of transposing into a tactile sensation, lends the painting a new depth."<sup>316</sup> Depth here refers not to the use of linear perspective in a two dimensional pictorial representation but rather to the sense of tangibility that he goes on to claim engenders a new mental space, literally a "world" (*monde*), held together by dreams. He continues, "A depth where an object's weight registers with mathematical precision to a symbolic volume, while its density, its flavor and consistency, place before us a unique reality

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<sup>314</sup> "We could play at seeking out age-old precursors of collage and find many among the curiosities of hoaxes, caricaturists, and forgers. Contemporary collage does not demand one's attention by means of this trivial heritage." Aragon, "The Challenge to Painting," 60-61.

<sup>315</sup> Tzara, "The Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting," 219.

<sup>316</sup> Tzara, "The Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting," 218-219.

created by the force of mind and dream.”<sup>317</sup> Tzara uses the verb “*s’inscrit*”—inscribes itself—to refer to the process whereby material juxtaposition fosters tactile and even gustatory sensations, thereby creating a new reality that emerges from the mind. His syntax evokes handwriting and thus deftly ties collage back to the broader category of poetry while maintaining its superior aesthetic powers.<sup>318</sup>

As noted above, Tzara utilizes the word “newspaper” as an umbrella term to refer to a variety of ordinary materials, from the daily newspaper, posters, and advertisements incorporated into *papiers collés* to the feathers, sand, and string – among other materials – utilized in collage and assemblage. Tzara again emphasizes the interpellation of the quotidian into linguistic and plastic formulae as the central characteristic of artistic innovation. In an especially revealing section, he describes a wall plastered with posters:

Pelted by showers, storms or the sun, the typical formula, the sign or the color, awakens the simulacrum of an ancient cult long since vanished from human affairs in that part of man where sparks still rapidly ignite and control reason and desire. No other phenomenon of modern life has established such intimate connections with the mind as this strange monster, advertising.<sup>319</sup>

His description immediately conjures the shapes and colors seen even today on the walls of the Paris metro and the Morris columns of its boulevards. Could that be Tzara himself with his back to us in Brassai’s 1932 photograph, standing near the cylinder plastered with advertisements for performances as diverse as a Charlie Chaplin film and the opera *Tristan and Isolde*? In the background of another photograph depicting a sex worker at

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<sup>317</sup> Tzara, “The Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting,” 218-219.

<sup>318</sup> “La différence de matières, que l’œil est capable de transposer en sensation tactile, donne une nouvelle profondeur au tableau, où le poids *s’inscrit* avec une précision mathématique dans le symbole du volume tandis que sa densité, son goût sur la langue, sa consistance, nous mettent devant une réalité unique *dans un monde* créé par la force de l’esprit et du rêve.” Tristan Tzara, “Le papier collé ou le proverbe en peinture,” *Cahiers d’art* 6, no. 2 (1931), 62.

<sup>319</sup> Tzara, “The Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting,” 219.

the Place d'Italie, we catch a glimpse of the fractal nature of these public papiers collés as they fade, fold, flip, and eventually fly away, subjected to the elements. According to Tzara, these simultaneously accumulating and degenerating images in the public sphere stimulate the part of the mind associated with early human religion and assert their control over both reason and desire.

Yet modernity provides merely a semblance or effigy of these former mythic systems. He asserts that, "Advertising has insinuated itself into the mold of a dead religious sensation. A myth has taken shape – according to obscure, prehistoric processes: the power of the poster."<sup>320</sup> Tzara's text implies that the use of familiar materials such as newspaper in collage parallels the debased form of myth-making engendered by modern advertisements.<sup>321</sup>

In contrast to Tzara, Aragon ties collage operations to magic rather than myth. He observes that, "It is curious that virtually no one seems to have noticed a singular occupation certain people are now systematically undertaking, which recalls more the procedures of magic than those of painting."<sup>322</sup> Aragon builds on the distinction between representational and material elements in collage established at the outset of his essay: "We see that here painters are truly beginning to use objects as words. The new magicians have reinvented incantation."<sup>323</sup> Although – like Tzara – Aragon frames

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> My evocation of a perambulatory amid the material conditions of urban life of course connects to Baudelaire's 1863 essay, *The Painter of Modern Life*. However, as Tzara does not specify the mode or place of encounter, I cannot know if he intended to evoke the flaneur in this essay and thus remains outside the scope of my discussion.

<sup>322</sup> Aragon, "The Challenge to Painting," 52.

<sup>323</sup> Aragon, "The Challenge to Painting," 56.

collage as evoking ancient pictorial practices, by using the term “incantation,” he connects collage processes of assembly to spoken language.<sup>324</sup>

Despite the similarities outlined above, however, Tzara ultimately departs from the surrealist understanding of collage laid out in Aragon’s remarks for the Galerie Goemans exhibition by emphasizing the insertion of adages in written language. What Taylor and Cole translate as “commonplace” is in fact the French term, “*le lieu commun*,” which carries additional connotations more closely associated with a timeworn cliché.<sup>325</sup> Tzara thus postulates that collage, defined as the insertion of newspaper elements into painting, represents a poetic process analogous to that whereby orally-transmitted axioms are introduced into poetic texts. The title of his essay – *papier collé* or the proverb in painting – deftly encapsulates this complex argument.

#### Between the Fetish and *Nyama*: The Idea of Africa in Tzara’s Theory of Collage

Like all of Tzara’s literary and aesthetic criticism, his essay for *Cahiers d’art* presents a multi-step argument in elliptical prose. Tzara differentiated himself from his surrealist colleagues by defining poetry as a symbolic practice characterized by the juxtaposition of so-called quotidian and fine art materials. Furthermore, as I will now demonstrate, his syntax signals his understanding of collage’s connection to non-European art forms, specifically sub-Saharan African *minkisi*, *boliv*, and other

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<sup>324</sup> “By restoring its true meaning to the ancient pictorial act, making it impossible for the painter to abandon himself to narcissism, to art for art’s sake, and leading him back to magical practices, origin and justification of that plastic representation forbidden by many religions.” Aragon, “The Challenge to Painting,” 60-61.

<sup>325</sup> Original: “Le lieu commun, ce bloc autonome du langage parlé, pris entièrement et introduit dans la phrase écrite, représente une opposition dans l’ordre poétique où la nature de la pensée peut se lever jusqu’à des transparences insoupçonnées.” Tzara, “Le papier collé ou le proverbe en peinture,” 62.

accumulative works. Further, Tzara emphasized a phenomenology of aesthetic experience shared conceptually across African masquerades and European collage predicated in their material heterogeneity.

Referring to his European colleagues working in the medium of collage, Tzara asserts that,

I tell you these few, whether poets or painters, were the first to become aware of the means which the new *fetishism*, advertising, put at their disposal. They embraced only its essence and mythical value, leaving to lovers of the picturesque the enjoyment of its external forms, illustrations of a sordid modernism.<sup>326</sup>

Whereas Tzara had previously identified advertisements as impoverished modern emblems that made an appeal to ancient, cultic desires, here he refines and expands his earlier assessment, deeming their power “fetishistic.” The etymology and contemporary use of this term clarifies Tzara’s thinking about the medium of collage.

The term “fetish” originated among sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European merchants to refer to the technologies deployed by West African practitioners to maintain their efficacy as conduits of both spiritual and material resources within their communities. As Lorand Matory notes in *The Fetish Revisited: Marx, Freud, and the Gods Black People Make*, both African practices and European theories developed to understand them articulated contested proposals of how to assign value and agency to certain objects.<sup>327</sup> Charles de Brosses, the French philosopher credited with publishing the word in his 1757 book *On the Worship of the Fetish Gods (Du Culte des dieux fétiches)*, understood fetishism to be the non-allegorical worship of material objects, seen

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<sup>326</sup> Tzara, “The Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting,” 220. Emphasis mine.

<sup>327</sup> J. Lorand Matory, “Introduction,” *The Fetish Revisited: Marx, Freud, and the Gods Black People Make* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 39.

as endowed with divine powers.<sup>328</sup> Although de Brosses used the term to refer to the religious practices of prehistoric man, the European working classes, and Africans and Asians more broadly, “fetishism” became associated nearly exclusively with Afro-Atlantic and Pacific peoples who were increasingly subject to European imperialism.<sup>329</sup>

By 1931, when Tzara was writing, the term had been adapted by Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud.<sup>330</sup> In line with his mercantile predecessors and colonial contemporaries who absconded with these objects, Marx designates the commodity fetish as pathological because it represents the displacement of agency and value from the site of its production, human labor, onto something else.<sup>331</sup> Rosalind Morris deftly contrasts Marx’s thesis with de Brosses’s: “If the African fetishist of de Brosses’s text grants force to the thing *itself*, the capitalist grants force to the thingness of his disavowal, to the abstraction through which labor is effaced.”<sup>332</sup> In Marxian terms, the commodity obscures the fact that labor is the source of value through the process of the abstraction of value into a monetary system under capitalism.

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<sup>328</sup> Rosalind Morris, “After de Brosses,” *The Returns of Fetishism: Charles de Brosses and the Afterlives of an Idea* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 193.

<sup>329</sup> William Pietz, “The Problem of the Fetish, I,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 9 (Spring, 1985): 5-17.

<sup>330</sup> Karl Marx, “Section 4: The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof, Chapter 1: Commodities, Part 1: Commodities and Money,” *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Book One, Volume 1*, ed. Frederick Engels, transl. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1887; 2015), 48. Sigmund Freud, “Fetishism,” *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 9 (1928): 161-166.

Subsequent theorists, such as Louis Althusser and Jean Baudrillard, have tried to use psychoanalytic understandings of fetishism to proffer ways around and/or out of ideological systems of subjugation (post-structuralism), while feminist and queer theorists have critiqued Freud’s notion of sexuality and fetishism as intrinsically misogynistic and heteronormative.

<sup>331</sup> J. Lorand Matory, “Introduction,” *The Fetish Revisited: Marx, Freud, and the Gods Black People Make* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 35.

<sup>332</sup> Rosalind Morris, “After de Brosses,” *The Returns of Fetishism: Charles de Brosses and the Afterlives of an Idea* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 203. Emphasis original.

Notwithstanding his public avowal of communist principles, Tzara did not join any political party until after the conclusion of the Second World War. While scholars have framed this fact as stemming from his opposition to the aesthetic program of the Third International (namely socialist realism), the bureaucratic and material conditions of his life at that moment offer a more plausible explanation. As a resident alien, Tzara was unable to fully participate in civic life: he was ineligible to formally register with any political party, as indeed to vote in national elections.<sup>333</sup> Despite the precarity of his position in an increasingly xenophobic France as discussed in the previous chapter, in 1933 Tzara joined the Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists (*Association des Écrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires* or AEAR), an activist organization affiliated with international socialism.<sup>334</sup> Furthermore, he participated in events associated with the French Communist Party (*Parti communiste français* or PCF), including the 1931 Anti-Colonial Exhibition, which I discuss below, and the Popular Front (*Front populaire* or FP), which organized public demonstrations in Nice in 1935, discussed in chapter four.

The year after he published his essay on collage in *Cahiers d'art*, Tzara contributed a text to the fourth issue of Breton's *Surrealism in the Service of the Revolution* (*Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*) in which he vehemently advocated for the integration of the Marxian theory of dialectical materialism into

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<sup>333</sup> Tzara applied for an identity card immediately upon his arrival in Paris on January 17, 1920. Just a few months later he journeyed to Bucharest for the first time since leaving Romania in 1916 to obtain a passport. Previously, Jewish persons were not recognized as citizens; following the conclusion of the First World War, in order to be admitted to the League of Nations and to have their independence from Austro-Hungary recognized, Romania granted citizenship to its Jewish residents. See Adrian Sudhalter, "How to Make a Dada Anthology," *Dadaglobe Reconstructed* (Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2016), 64-65. Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>334</sup> Marius Hentea, *Dada/Tata: The Real Life and Celestial Adventures of Tristan Tzara* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), 234-5.

surrealist aesthetic frameworks.<sup>335</sup> In it, Tzara adopted the polemical tone characteristic of the moment to assert that,

The beginnings of beauty, static and immutable beauty, leading to the notion of the masterpiece, are the unshakable foundations on which it has been claimed – a house of cards so often thrown to the ground, so many times put back in place – in order to raise the building of art. It would be inadmissible if, proclaiming revolutionary theories, we accept as a whole a notion whose bases are idealistic in order to adapt it, without seeking its sources and foundations, in the frameworks of dialectical materialism. Such a process could only lead to absurd results.<sup>336</sup>

According to the dada founder, the traditional idea of beauty must be unearthed and its roots exposed. Tzara's understanding of collage centered on its material aspects closely tied to processes of manufacture, namely its interpolation of the real with the representational. Ultimately, however, his essay focused on the psychological profile and visual world of the modern urban dweller, skirting direct discussions of labor, class, or other concepts central to Marxist understandings of history.

Nevertheless, by utilizing the term “fetishism” to refer to commercial advertisements in his 1931 essay for *Cahiers d'art*, Tzara signaled his alignment with Marx's notion that, in the capitalist system, commodities obscure class relations.

Advertisements, as the material representatives of the process of abstraction that results in the alienation of the white working classes from their labor, function as the reactant of

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<sup>335</sup> Key Surrealist publications in communist/socialist journals include a declaration in *L'Humanité* on November 8, 1925; their responses to *Clarté's* June 1925 questionnaire about the Moroccan War; and an essay by Breton in the January 1926 issue no. 79 of *Clarté*. See Jack Spector, “Chapter 3 – In the Service of Which Revolution? An Aborted Incarnation of the Dream: Marxism and Surrealism,” *Surrealist Art and Writing, 1919/39: The Gold of Time* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 70-94, 234-249.

<sup>336</sup> “Les prémices de la beauté, la beauté statique et immuable, menant droit à la notion du chef-d'œuvre, sont les fondements inébranlables sur lesquels on a prétendu – château de cartes tant de fois jeté par terre, tant de fois remis en place – élever l'édifice de l'art. Il serait inadmissible que, se réclamant des théories révolutionnaires, on accepte en bloc une notion dont les bases sont idéalistes pour l'adapter, sans en rechercher les sources et les fondements, aux cadres du matérialisme dialectique. Un tel procédé ne pourrait aboutir qu'à des résultats absurdes.” Tristan Tzara, “Situation sur la poésie,” *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* no. 4 (1932), 10. Translation mine.



the modern subject's desire for the commodities represented. Importing Marx's logic into his theory of collage, Tzara asserts that European artists effectively harnessed the affective powers of these newspapers and posters. Tzara's word choice in "Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting" thus telegraphed his commitment to Marxist dialectical materialism while deftly articulating an aesthetic theory that imbued collage's materials with agentic powers, echoing traditional eighteenth-century European misconstructions of African epistemologies.

Placing Tzara's essay on collage in dialogue with a nearly contemporaneous essay published in the same journal on artworks from the Pacific Islands further illuminates his complex synthesis of the domains of European political theory, art criticism, and ethnographic studies.<sup>337</sup> In "Art and Oceania (*L'art et l'Océanie*)" published in the 1929 special issue of *Cahiers d'art*, Tzara rehearsed what would become key aspects of his analysis of collage. He first asserts that, "Poetry is one of the greatest forces of humanity. It is not written, it lives at the bottom of the crucible where all human crystallization, all social condensation is prepared, however simple it may be."<sup>338</sup> In other words, poetry is a universal aural artistic force that can emerge from even the most basic human interactions. Tzara identifies this poetic principle in Oceanic works and explicitly places

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<sup>337</sup> Key scholarly publications on this topic include: Vicent Debaene, *Far Afield: French Anthropology between Science and Literature*, trans. Justin Izzo (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2014). Julia Kelly, *Ethnography and the Life of Objects, Paris, c. 1925-35* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2007).

<sup>338</sup> "C'est la poésie qui est une des plus grandes forces de l'humanité. Elle ne s'écrit pas, elle vit au fond du creuset où se prépare toute cristallisation humaine, toute condensation sociale, aussi simple soit-elle." Tristan Tzara, "L'art et l'Océanie," *Cahiers d'art* nos. 2-3 (Paris, 1929): 60. Translation mine.

them at the apogee of artistic creation, claiming simply that, “A higher-order logical function rules the Pacific world.”<sup>339</sup>

Tzara’s definition of poetry incorporates Breton’s language from the second surrealist manifesto, published the same year. For Tzara, “Only poetic action, imposing the arbitrary with the fanaticism of a definitive sanction, and pushing it to the point of losing both reason and feeling, could reduce the contradictions between the object and its meaning.”<sup>340</sup> Furthermore, Tzara framed Oceanic works as emblematic of the ancient rituals that he would identify two years later in warped form in the advertisements that artists introduced into collage. He writes, “Families of idols can be related, they will always remain strictly surrounded by rigid laws like coral. Members of these families can evolve, change their appearance, they will never lose resemblance to their ancestors.”<sup>341</sup> As such, Tzara’s assessment of Oceanic art corresponds to what scholar Sidney Kasfir terms the authenticity paradigm, in which the value of *arts primitifs* was rooted in their perceived timelessness.<sup>342</sup> While Tzara’s assessment is predicated in the problematic and inaccurate perception of Pacific Island societies as isolated and thus hermetically sealed off from modernity, his comments simultaneously stressed the universal and – in his mind – superior characteristics of Indigenous cultural forms.

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<sup>339</sup> “Une fonction logique d’un ordre supérieur régit le monde océanien.” Ibid. Translation mine.

<sup>340</sup> “Seule l’action poétique, imposant l’arbitraire avec le fanatisme d’une sanction définitive, et le poussant jusqu’à en perdre et la raison et le sentiment, pouvait réduire les antinomies entre l’objet et son sens.” Tzara, “L’art et l’Océanie,” 60. Translation mine.

<sup>341</sup> “Des familles d’idoles peuvent s’apparenter, elles resteront toujours strictement encerclées dans les lois rigides comme le corail. Des membres de ces familles peuvent évoluer, changer d’aspect, ils ne perdront jamais la ressemblance avec leurs ancêtres.” Tristan Tzara, “L’art et l’Océanie,” *Cahiers d’art*, nos. 2-3 (1929): 60. Translation mine.

<sup>342</sup> Sidney L. Kasfir, “African Art and Authenticity: A Text with a Shadow,” *African Arts* 25: 3 (April 1992): 40-53. Notable subsequent scholarship on the topic of authenticity includes: Alisa LaGamma, Special Issue: “Authorship in African Art,” *African Arts* 31:4 (Autumn 1998). Z.S. Strother, “Invention and Reinvention in the Traditional Arts,” *African Arts* 28:2 (Spring, 1995): 24-33. Susan Mullin Vogel, “Known Artists but Anonymous Works,” *African Arts*, 32:1 (1999): 40.

Indeed Tzara asserts that Europeans have failed entirely to recognize the artistic qualities of Oceanic works: “But while among the Pacific peoples, the results of these collective operations take on what in our eyes is the value of works of art, in so-called ‘civilized’ societies they do not rise but to the level of some vague and hybrid superstitions.”<sup>343</sup> Tzara here deploys language that prefigures his description of modern commercial images in order to critique what he believes are shortsighted assessments of Oceanic material cultures.

Opening up an avenue for his subsequent line of argument about collage, Tzara asserts that modern life offers elements of mystery and shock similar to those in Oceanic art. He concludes,

Thus the work of art which has renounced a goal of entertainment (so few are nowadays in favor of it!) tries not only to break away from weak human conditions but also to dominate them. Intrinsic life presents, proportionally compared to the problems of current life, the same character of mystery and inconsistency that we love in Oceanian art.<sup>344</sup>

Despite identifying a degraded quality of imagination precipitated by modern advertisements in comparison to Oceanic artworks, Tzara nevertheless maintained that their power could be effectively harnessed by avant-garde artists through the medium of collage in his 1931 essay, as discussed above.

Examining these two essays, on Oceanic works and collage respectively, published just two years apart in *Cahiers d'art* demonstrates how Tzara placed these

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<sup>343</sup> “Mais tandis que chez les peuplades océaniques les résultats de ces opérations collectives prennent à nos yeux la valeur d’œuvres d’art, dans nos sociétés dit ‘civilisées’ ils ne franchissent pas le niveau de quelques vagues et hybrides superstitions.” Tzara, “L’art et l’Océanie,” 60. Translation mine.

<sup>344</sup> “Ainsi l’œuvre d’art ayant renoncé à un but de divertissement (si peu nombreux en sont encore aujourd’hui les partisans !) essaie non seulement de se détacher des faibles conditions humaines mais aussi de les dominer. La vie intrinsèque présente, toutes proportions gardées par rapports aux problèmes de la vie actuelle, le même caractère de mystère et d’inconséquence que nous aimons dans l’art océanique.” Tzara, “L’art et l’Océanie,” 60. Translation mine.

forms in dialogue, predicated on their shared fundamental principle of juxtaposition which he terms poetry. Indeed, Tzara situates Oceanic artworks as a leading impetus for subsequent European modernist innovations.

Tzara's comments on artworks from sub-Saharan Africa further illuminate how his definition of the poetic principle in these objects correlates with his understanding of collage. The poet's archives at the Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet hold fragmentary notes of a manuscript on African art, which were eventually published as "The Art of Black Peoples," in the French Communist journal *New Democracy* (*Démocratie Nouvelle*) in 1954.<sup>345</sup> In this later text, Tzara provides the most explicit understanding of "fetishism," differentiating between power objects, or what he terms "classical fetishes," ancestral commemorative sculptures, and masks. He asserts that,

The majority of Negro statues are portraits of ancestors. They seem destined to maintain the form of a cult, the traditions of customs and oral laws. Incorrectly termed fetishes, these sort of guiding genies, whose profound significance escapes us, don't possess the principles derived from animism which have informed our general conception of their spiritual world. These virtues are incarnated in the fetishes properly called which could be deprived of figuration. They contain, incorporated into their mass, 'magic' substances, types of symbols materialized from natural forces, which activate in the manner of medicines, or serve other purposes, for the most part as objects of sorcerers.<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> TZR 262 154 ff, *Le Pouvoir des Images*, "Sur l'art des peuples noirs africains," TZR 275 Af – *Le Pouvoir des Images*, "L'Art de l'Afrique Noir." Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris.

<sup>346</sup> "La plupart des statues nègres sont des portraits d'ancêtres. Elles semblent destinées à maintenir, sous la forme d'une culte, la tradition des coutumes et des lois orales. A tort appelés fétiches, ces sortes de génies tutélaires, dont souvent la signification profonde nous échappe, ne possèdent pas les vertus dérivées de l'animisme qui a été la conception générale de leur monde spirituel. Ces vertus sont incarnées dans les fétiches proprement dits qui peuvent être démunis de représentation figurative. Ils contiennent, incorporées à leur masse, des substances 'magiques', sortes de symboles matérialisés de forces naturelles, qui agissent à la manière de 'médecines' ou servent à d'autres usages et sont pour la plupart du ressort des sorciers." Tristan Tzara, "Sur les arts des peuples noirs," *Démocratie Nouvelle*, Numéro spécial, no. 5 (1954): 43. Translation mine.

Tzara here refers to *minkisi*, which originated in the Kongo kingdom and its related territories in Central Africa and constitute a variety of physical receptacles, including cloth packets and carved wood sculptures. While contemporary scholars eschew terms such as “magic” and “sorcery” in their discussion of *minkisi*, given the origin of these terms in racist approaches to interpreting African epistemologies, current understandings of these works also stress their agency. After a sculptor carved the underlying structure, the *nganga*, or specialist, transformed it into an work capable of facilitating healing and jurisprudence for individuals and the community.

Of the more than seventy-five African works in Tzara’s collection, discussed more fully in the following chapter, two can be classified as *minkisi*. The larger of the two, created by an unidentified *nganga* from what is today the Democratic Republic of the Congo prior to the mid-1920s, is composed of a gourd topped with a carved wooden female figure, leather, and shells (Fig. 3.1). As François Neyt noted in 1993, this *nkisi* is notable for its distinctive coiffure and belongs to a unique category of power objects termed *kabwelulu*.<sup>347</sup> This work, today in a private collection, was included in two major mid-twentieth-century exhibitions, namely the exhibition of African and Oceanic art at the Galerie Pigalle in 1930 discussed below and the 1935 *African Negro Art* at The Museum of Modern Art discussed in the following chapter. While I have been unable to determine how or when Tzara acquired this work, it is evident that he – and European scholars – considered it especially important: not only was it frequently exhibited, but it also held pride of place in his home (Fig. 3.2).

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<sup>347</sup> François Neyt, *Luba: Aux sources du Zaïre* (Paris: Éditions Dapper, 1993), 158, 162-3.

Although the whereabouts of Tzara's other *nkisi* (Fig. 3.3) are currently unknown, I have been able to determine its acquisition history. Indeed, the only known image of the work is its reproduction as number 143 in the March 17, 1930 sale at Hôtel Drouot presided over by French auctioneer Leon Flagel (lot number 18). Tzara purchased this small work at this sale for the rather astounding sum of 170 francs (€10,004.66 in 2019).<sup>348</sup> Tzara earned a meager income from commissioned essays and poetry book sales suggesting that he relied on assets shared with his wife, the artist Greta Knutson, to finance the couple's growing collection. The seated figure holds a globe in his hands, outstretched immediately before his mouth as if about to consume the efficacious materials packed therein, termed *bilongo*. The cap on his head, an *mpu* in Kikongo and other related central African languages, indicates the prestige and potency of the figure.<sup>349</sup> Both of the *minkisi* in Tzara's collection are emblematic of the central characteristic that he identified in both African and Oceanic works and collage: the frisson provoked by the contrast between the object's composition of mundane materials and its ritual purpose.

Furthermore, Tzara distinguished masks from so-called fetishes or *minkisi*. Utilizing terms that reflect conventional anthropological notions of the 1950s, he observed that,

The anthropomorphic or zoomorphic masks (or combines, the animals can have attributes imputed to multiple species) serve, that is to say at ceremonies of initiation, among others, care of ritual dances or simply of

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<sup>348</sup> Leon Flagel, 17 March 1930, Box D141E3 16, Archives de Paris, Paris.

<sup>349</sup> Phyllis M. Martin, "The Kingdom of Loango," *Kongo: Power and Majesty*, ed. Alisa LaGamma (New Haven and London: Yale University Press for The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015), 64-71.

parties. The employment of masks had been common among the peoples - they are principally attached to totemic beginnings.<sup>350</sup>

In other words, everyday materials – wood, raffia, cloth, hair, feathers, iron – were changed through their assembly in striking juxtapositions and animation through performance into ritual.<sup>351</sup>

In the penultimate paragraph of “Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting,” Tzara further tied the medium of collage to the discourse of ethnography by invoking masked performance:

Within his particular material limits, man has forever attempted to raise himself from the slime with which he identifies his body. The mask over the human countenance may well have provided him the infinite proportions which, by their very monstrousness, belong to the celestial spheres of depersonalization.<sup>352</sup>

Tzara builds on conventional European notions of the function of masquerade within indigenous African epistemologies: just as masquerades convert the mundane into the mythical through the transformation of materials facilitated through social engagement, so does collage. For Tzara, the European artist’s insertion of newspapers into painting

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<sup>350</sup> “Les masque anthropomorphes ou zoomorphes (ou combines, les animaux pouvant avoir des attribues empruntées à plusieurs espèces), servent soit à des cérémonies, d’initiation entre autres, soient à des danses rituelles ou simplement à des fêtes. L’emploi des masques a été commun à Presque tous les peuples: ils sont principalement rattachés aux principes totémiques. Ceux du carnaval, chez nous, en sont la survivance.” Tzara, “Sur les arts des peuples noirs,” 43. Translation mine.

<sup>351</sup> Key academic texts on the relationship between masking costumes, audiences, and ritual include: Herbert Cole, *I Am Not Myself: The Art of African Masquerade*. Monograph series (University of California, Los Angeles. Museum of Cultural History) no. 26 (Los Angeles: Museum of Cultural History, University of California, 1985). Sidney Kasfir, ed. *West African Masks and Cultural Systems* (Tervuren: Musée royale de l’Afrique centrale, 1988). Simon Ottenberg, “Illusion, Communication, and Psychology in West African Masquerades,” *Ethos* 10: 2 (Summer, 1982): 149-185. John Picton, “What’s in a Mask,” *African Languages and Cultures* 3:2 (1990): 181 – 202. Roy Sieber, “Masks and Agents of Social Control,” *African Studies Bulletin* 5:2 (1962): 8-13. Robert Farris Thompson, *African Art in Motion: Icon and Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

<sup>352</sup> Tzara, “Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting,” 220.

precipitates a mental shift in the viewer, by virtue of its pre-assigned socially defined value as distinct from the work of art.

Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, the cubist movement's first proponent and dealer, also connected avant-garde artworks to African masks, but on wholly different terms. In *The Rise of Cubism (Der Weg zum Kubismus)*, published in 1920, Kahnweiler identified masks from Côte d'Ivoire as exhibiting the synthesis of painting and sculpture found in Cubist artworks beginning in 1912.<sup>353</sup>

The negroes of the Ivory Coast have made use of a very similar method of expression in their dance masks. These are constructed as follows: a completed flat plane forms the lower part of the face; to this is joined the high forehead, which is sometimes equally flat, sometimes bent slightly backward. While the nose is added as a simple strip of wood, two cylinders protrude about eight centimeters to form the eyes, and one slightly shorter hexahedron forms the mouth. The frontal surfaces of the cylinder and hexahedron are painted, and the hair is represented by raffia. It is true that the form is still closed here; however, it is not the 'real' form, but rather a tight formal scheme of plastic primeval force. Here, too, we find a scheme of forms and 'real details' (the painted eyes, mouth and hair) as stimuli. The result in the mind of the spectator, the desired effect, is a human face.<sup>354</sup>

Kahnweiler here is describing the *kru* mask which he hung in his apartment (Fig. 3.4).<sup>355</sup>

Although Kahnweiler discusses this work primarily in relation to paintings, his assessment can be applied equally to collage.

Pablo Picasso's *Head of a Man* (Fig. 3.5), reproduced in Tzara's collage essay for *Cahiers d'art*, exemplifies Kahnweiler's understanding of masks as flat planes and projecting volumes forming a face. This papier collé from 1912, and at that time in

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<sup>353</sup> Daniel Henry, *Der Weg zum Kubismus* (Munich, Delphin-Verlag, 1920), Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, *The Rise of Cubism* in *The Documents of Modern Art* series, ed. Robert Motherwell, trans. Henry Aronson (New York, NY: Wittenborn, Schultz, Inc., 1949), 15.

<sup>354</sup> Kahnweiler, *The Rise of Cubism*, 16.

<sup>355</sup> Jonathan Hay, "Primitivism Reconsidered, Part 2," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 69/70 (2018): 1-24.



Tzara's collection, depicts the bust of a man wearing a hat and is composed of drafting paper overlaid with blue-grey paper and newspapers, embellished with charcoal and watercolor. Constructed of a formal vocabulary of basic elements—primarily straight lines and curves—shapes become multi-referential: an almond form refers both to the man's eyes and the mouth, a series of parallel vertical lines evokes parts of the figure's hat, his neck, and his upper torso, and the double curve of the ear recalls the fragmented and displaced curves of the hat.

Further, Picasso's use of pasted elements adheres in part to Aragon's assessment of the mimetic role of certain forms in these early *papiers collés*. The loosely painted piece of paper may stand for the wood paneling of the wall behind the figure, or perhaps, ironically, for machine printed, cheap wood-grain wallpaper of the period, but of course it is neither. It further functions both as a rectilinear shape—a figure against the paper support—and as a neutral field for further figuration (the wood grain pattern). The vertical strip of upside-down newspaper, a mechanically produced element, generates a similar play of figure and ground. Placed just below a dark horizontal line that evokes the wainscoting border on a wall that appeared in so many of Picasso's collages, it too suggests part of wall behind the man. And like the faux wood grain, it oscillates between signifying a position in depth and one resolutely on the surface of the work. The function of the various elements toggle between figure and ground, surface and depth, reference to a “real world” element and abstract shape.

At the time of its reproduction, *Head of a Man*, belonged to Tzara. He acquired it at the 1923 sequestration sale of artworks formerly held by Kahnweiler. Indeed, it was clearly very important to him: he featured it prominently in his home on Avenue Junot

(Fig. 3.6) and managed to hold onto it during the Second World War, after which it remained in his study on the rue de Lille (Fig. 3.7).

Kahnweiler's description of African masks was predicated on their stasis while on display in European artists' studios and homes – including his own – and thus is a fundamentally Eurocentric concept of these works. He disregarded the perspective of African makers and audiences for these masks, already well documented in European ethnographic literature, in which masks were not understood as easily legible forms of sculpture. Rather, through the animating process of motion – identified and compellingly analyzed by Robert Farris Thompson – or through the blending of human and animal features, masks constituted just one element in a multisensorial social and spiritual experience.<sup>356</sup> In his essay in *Cahiers d'art*, Tzara shifted the terms established by Kahnweiler, connecting collage and African works in material terms, emphasizing a processual phenomenology of aesthetic experience, rather than the parameters of relief sculpture defined by his forebear. Yet Tzara was not the first critic to be interested in the aesthetic models offered by the heterogeneous media incorporated into a single work by artists from West Africa and the Pacific.

As Julia Kelly notes, an alternative perspective on West African material cultures among the European avant-gardes can be traced to Guillaume Apollinaire's essay

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<sup>356</sup> Thompson proffers a paradigm of masks as constellations, emphasizing the importance of performance within practices of masquerade in West Africa. Thompson combined consultations with indigenous experts (total of 96 informants, both rural and urban) and modern scholars, with visual analysis of objects, in order to demonstrate concordant criteria across all three sources. Thompson identifies the following as the key aspects: call and response, balance, youthfulness, facial serenity, descent, suspending beat, ultimately postulating West African masquerade practices as “mid-point mimesis,” meaning neither too realistic nor too abstract (what we might term veristic). See Robert Farris Thompson, *African Art in Motion: Icon and Act* (Los Angeles CA: University of California Press, 1974).

published in Paul Guillaume's *Sculptures nègres* portfolio.<sup>357</sup> Apollinaire's commentary for the influential 1917 book was primarily derived from an essay by then-director of the Trocadéro Ethnographic Museum (*Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro*), René Verneau, entitled "Fetishism Through the Ages (*Le Fétichisme à travers les âges*)."<sup>358</sup> Verneau's essay focused on objects incorporating multiple materials, evoking the more than two dozen *minkisi* then in the museum's collections.<sup>358</sup> Apollinaire's commentary, listing the various materials deployed in *minkisi* from mirrors to feathers, in turn, stands in contrast to the smooth surfaces and lustrous patinas of the works favored and promoted by Guillaume. As Kelly observes, *minkisi* "had a resistance to visual apprehension, not easily grasped as coherent and 'harmonious' forms, and suggested a challenge to temporality, appearing ongoing and unfinished."<sup>359</sup> Tzara had a copy of *Sculptures nègres* and would have been familiar with the project through his correspondence with both Apollinaire and Guillaume beginning the year prior to its publication.<sup>360</sup>

After Picasso, Tzara reproduced the work of surrealist artist André Masson most frequently in his essay for *Cahiers d'art* because of its close connection to his theory of collage and the *minkisi* that informed it. Masson's *Leaf, Feather, Drop of Blood (Feuille, Plumes et Goutte de Sang)* from 1927 (Fig. 3.8) consists of oil paint on canvas and a single feather. Masson's loosely undulating black brushstrokes evoke a face, a horse, and a bird, respectively, in contrast to the illusionistic bright red droplet of blood floating at the bottom of the composition and the small grey and white feather pasted directly onto

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<sup>357</sup> Julia Kelly, "The Anthropology of Assemblage," *Art Journal* 67: no. 1 (Spring 2008): 26.

<sup>358</sup> René Verneau, "Le Fétichisme à travers les âges," *La Nature* 2221 (April 22, 1916).

<sup>359</sup> Kelly, "The Anthropology of Assemblage," 26.

<sup>360</sup> TZR C 58-63, Guillaume Apollinaire; TZR C 1846 – 1862, Paul Guillaume, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

the canvas immediately above. A splash of red forms the beak of the bird in the upper right portion of the work, while a small leaf, rendered in green paint, emanates from the face in the left portion of the work. Masson's almost calligraphic black lines, which trace the artist's gestures, were central to Tzara's understanding of poetic ritual. The feather, incorporating the real directly into the representational space of the picture plane, offers another instantiation – like the newspaper – of Tzara's definition of collage's poetic principle.

As the foregoing analysis shows, Tzara's publications during this time period demonstrate that he had a dual goal, namely to establish a historically-grounded theory of collage that acknowledged the inspirational role of African and Oceanic objects on dada and surrealist art positioning the materiality and phenomenology of those works as the paramount point of convergence. My research thus establishes Tzara's criticism as another node within the development of the history of assemblage and collage.<sup>361</sup>

### *L'Informel: Dissident Strains in Tzara's Theory of Collage*

While Aragon situated Max Ernst as the progenitor of post-cubist collage, Tzara notably did not reproduce any works by Ernst in his essay on papier collé for *Cahiers*

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<sup>361</sup> Adrian Sudhalter, "Collage as Symbolic Form: Margaret Miller, Collage and the 'Dislocations of War'," in *Cut and Paste: German Collage in New Contexts, 1912-2008*, Cole Collins, ed. (Bern: Peter Lang Verlag, forthcoming). Several aspects of Tzara's notion of collage and ethnography necessitates further research, particularly the role of works by Kurt Schwitters and the Study Group of Human Phenomenology that Tzara founded in 1935 along with Roger Callois and Jules Monnerot. Tzara reproduced Schwitters's 1919 collage *Merzbild K 6 Das Huthbild* in his essay for *Cahiers d'art*. That work was slated to be included in *Dadaglobe*, and it would be interesting to know what other of Schwitters's works Tzara might have been able to see either in person or in reproduction. Relatedly, the Phenomenology Study Group published a single issue of a journal entitled *Inquisitions* in June 1936, but I have not yet been able to find a copy for consultation; understanding Tzara's relationship with Callois is also important to fully fleshing out the interpenetration of African works and collage in his thinking between 1930 and 1936.

*d'art*.<sup>362</sup> Tzara instead included four works by Masson, recently expelled from Breton's group, to represent recent innovations in the medium, as well as two works by Joan Miró. These choices not only emblemize how Tzara's theory of collage differed from that of Aragon, but also alludes to Tzara's connections to another set of actors and issues, namely the so-called dissident surrealist circle surrounding scholar and critic Georges Bataille. In the pages of the journal *Documents*, which published fifteen issues between 1929 and 1930, Bataille propounded an intellectual framework in stated opposition to Breton's, rooted in an interest in what he termed "base materialism."<sup>363</sup> Along with co-editors Michel Leiris, Robert Desnos, and Carl Einstein, Bataille employed the principle of cultural and historical juxtaposition in the design of *Documents*, instantiating a challenge to the underlying epistemological bases of the disciplines invoked in its masthead: "doctrines, archaeology, fine art, and ethnography."<sup>364</sup>

Tzara proffered an antagonist teleology of the medium of collage, situating it explicitly and paradoxically within and in opposition to painting, utilizing the French term *la peinture*. He recounts that, "This was the birth of a new method, a discipline with many uses, whose first manifestation was the reaction against painting for painting's sake, and a desire to put an end to it by all available means."<sup>365</sup> In his essay published the year prior, Aragon had similarly defined collage as "[...] being in absolute opposition to painting, and beyond painting." Contrary to Taylor and Cole's translation, Tzara utilizes

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<sup>362</sup> Aragon, "The Challenge to Painting," 63. Despite his exclusion of Ernst in this essay, he published an entire article dedicated to the artist just a few years later, Tzara, Tristan, "Max Ernst et les images réversibles: A propos de sa récente exposition à la Galerie des 'Cahiers d'Art'," *Cahiers d'Art*, Année 9, 5-8 (1934): 165-71.

<sup>363</sup> Dawn Ades and Fiona Bradley, "Introduction," *Undercover Surrealism: Georges Bataille and DOCUMENTS* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 11.

<sup>364</sup> Ades and Bradley, "Introduction," 13-14.

<sup>365</sup> Tzara, "The Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting," 220.

the French verb “*tuer*,” rendering the meaning of his sentence “to kill it [painting] by *its own means*.”<sup>366</sup> The use of the verb “to kill” further ties Tzara’s thinking to the rhetoric of his close friend and artistic collaborator Joan Miró.

Bataille’s brief essay in the seventh issue of *Documents* framed Miró’s paintings as exemplifying *l’informe* or formless – a concept that he defined in the first issue of the journal as the act of bringing the world down to its base or purely material elements.<sup>367</sup>

According to Bataille,

Joan Miró begins with a representation of objects so meticulous that at a certain point they turn reality to dust, a sort of sunlit dust. Subsequently, these tiny objects individually liberate themselves from all reality and appear as a throng of decomposed elements which are also a lot more agitated. Finally, as Miró himself professed to want to ‘kill painting,’ the decomposition was pushed to such a point that nothing else remained but a few formless stains on the lid (or on the tombstone, if you prefer) of the box of tricks. The little angry and alienated elements proceeded to a new irruption, before once more disappearing today into these paintings, leaving only traces of who knows what disaster.<sup>368</sup>

Although meant to describe artworks such as *Painting (The Magic of Color)* of 1930, Bataille’s description could as easily be applied to any of the collages by Miró that Tzara chose to reproduce in his essay for *Cahiers d’art*, part of the series which Carl Einstein

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<sup>366</sup> “De là naquit une méthode nouvelle, une discipline aux multiples emplois, dont la première manifestation fut la réaction contre la peinture pour la peinture, et la volonté, par tous les moyens de discrédit, *de la tuer par ses propres moyens*.” Tristan Tzara, “Le papier collé ou le proverbe en peinture,” *Cahiers d’art* 6, no. 2 (1931), 64. Emphasis mine.

<sup>367</sup> Georges Bataille, “Formless,” *Documents* 1 (Paris, 1929): 382; repr. in *Georges Bataille. Vision of Excess. Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, trans. Allan Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie Jr. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 31.

<sup>368</sup> Georges Bataille, “Joan Miró: Recent Paintings,” *Documents* 7 (Paris, 1930), repr. in *Undercover Surrealism: Georges Bataille and DOCUMENTS*, ed. Dawn Ades and Fiona Bradley, trans. Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Michael Richardson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 134.

had discussed in the fourth issue of *Documents* published earlier that year, discussed further below.<sup>369</sup>

In a 1931 letter to the Belgian collector René Gaffé, Miró offered a synopsis of his friendship with Tristan Tzara. Explaining his most recent collaboration with the dada founder, *The Traveler's Tree* (*L'Arbre des voyageurs*), he stated:

As for what you ask me about my negotiations with Tzara and his asking me to illustrate his book, I should tell you that he was one of the first to see and like my painting. On my end, I have long considered his poetry to be of great spiritual value and his Dada position has always been extremely appealing to me, as clairvoyance and as a method of action. It was therefore all very simple; I gladly accepted without batting an eye.<sup>370</sup>

In just three sentences, Miró summarizes the intellectual points of convergence that precipitated the painter's lifelong friendship with the poet, unmarred – as so many of the relationships among the men of this generation of the avant-garde were – by hostility or disappointment.

Miró contributed four works to *The Traveler's Tree* (Fig. 3.10). In a letter to Tzara dated November 18, 1930 postmarked from his home in Montroig, Spain, he wrote,

My dear friend, I am sending you the two lithographs that I made with great pleasure. Tell me frankly if you find that stuck together. You did very well to ask me because with the other two lithographs I would have filled your book, which would have really produced an effect. I have it numbered for the page layout, but if however you want to change the order so that it goes well with your poems do it.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> For a discussion of Bataille's relationship with Masson, including possible reasons why Masson was never included in *Documents*, see Michael Surya, "From Contre-Attaque to Acephale: André Masson," *Georges Bataille: An Intellectual Biography*, trans. Krzysztof Filjalkowski and Michael Richardson (London and New York: Verso, 2002), 231-235.

<sup>370</sup> Joan Miró, Letter to René Gaffé, 18 March 1931, repr. *Joan Miró: Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. Margit Rowell (Boston, MA: G.K. Hall, 1986), 113.

<sup>371</sup> "Mon cher ami, Je vous envoie aujourd'hui le deux litho que j'ai fait avec un très grand plaisir. Dits moi franchement si vous trouve que la collé./ Vous avez très bien fait de me les demander car avec les deux autre litho on m'aurait que avez rempli votre livre, ce qui aurait cite vraiment donne image. / Je vous le ai numéro rées pour la mise en page, mais si toutefois vous tenez à changer le ordre pour que sa aille mieux

In contrast to Tzara and Miró's later collaboration, *The Antihead (L'Antitête)*, in which the two worked closely to create and place unique images in the collection of poems, here Miró left the arrangement largely in the hands of the author. The slim volume of poems takes its title from the colloquial name for the *Ravenala madagascariensis* (Fig. 3.11), a plant native to Madagascar so-called for its large fronds that can store up to one quart of rain water for weary travelers. Indeed, *The Traveler's Tree* was Tzara's respite from his exile from the Parisian artistic community precipitated by the simultaneous dissolution of Paris dada and ascendancy of surrealism under Breton's leadership six years prior.<sup>372</sup> His friendship with Miró, however, as the painter reminded Gaffé, was longstanding and based on shared artistic ideals.<sup>373</sup>

Miró articulated the central points of Tzara's 1931 analysis of collage in an interview with Francisco Melgar in his Paris studio published in the Madrileño journal *Abora* the same year. He observed,

The only thing that is clear to me is that I intend to destroy, destroy everything that exists in painting. I have an utter contempt for painting. The only thing that interests me is the spirit itself, and I only use the artist's customary tools – brushes, canvas, paint – to strike more precisely. The only reason why I abide by the rules of pictorial art is because they're essential for expressing what I feel, just as grammar is essential for expressing yourself.<sup>374</sup>

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avec vos poèmes faits le. / Veuillez faire mon amitiés a Greta et recevez une cordiale pour faire demain. / Miró [sic]" Joan Miró to Tristan Tzara, 18 November 1930, TZR C 2704, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

<sup>372</sup> "Ravenala madagascariensis," Missouri Botanical Garden <http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=282805>

<sup>373</sup> Joan Miró to Tristan Tzara, card postmarked 1923, TZR C 2702, Fonds Tzara, Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris.

<sup>374</sup> Francisco Melgar, "Interview, January 24, 1931," *Abora* (Madrid), repr. in *Joan Miró: Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. Margit Rowell (Boston, MA: G.K. Hall, 1986), 116.



Miró's central goal was to leverage the conventions of painting in order to demonstrate the essence of artistic expression. As Anne Umland observes, Miró utilized the term painting to refer to both a totalizing aesthetic category and its material substrate.<sup>375</sup> The first reported instance of Miró's statement that he wanted to "assassinate painting" is in Maurice Raynal's 1927 *Anthology of Painting in France from 1906 to the Present* (*Anthologie de la peinture en France de 1906 à nos jours*), although his correspondence, as Umland observes, holds the same violent rhetoric as early as 1924.<sup>376</sup> Interestingly, Raynal placed Miró's work under the heading of "'Dada' and Skepticism in Painting" – a fact that must have gratified both the artist and his poet friend.<sup>377</sup>

The overlapping language in Tzara's essay for *Cahiers d'art* and Miró's interview suggests a process of developing a shared and mutually reinforcing aesthetic theory between the two men during this time. Tzara built on Miró's idea of demolishing painting by positioning collage as the point of rupture identified by the two artists. Similarly, Miró's analogy between the artist's tools – the brush, canvas, and paint – and the poet's tools – words – reflects the influence of his friend's thinking. Further, Miró's description of his working method resonates with Tzara's understanding of collage's poetic power as derived from the insertion of everyday materials into the picture plane. Miró told Melgar that, "I paint the way I walk along the street. I pick up a pearl or a crust of bread, and that's what I give back, what I collect."<sup>378</sup> Miró's comments here seem to articulate a

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<sup>375</sup> Anne Umland, "Miró the Assassin," *Joan Miró: Painting and Anti-Painting* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 2.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>377</sup> Maurice Raynal, "'Dada' and Skepticism in Painting," *Modern French Painters*, trans. Ralph Roeder (New York, NY: Brentano's, 1928), 25-26.

<sup>378</sup> Melgar, "Interview, January 24, 1931," 117.

phenomenology not solely of the flaneur but also the ragpicker: the artist is one capable of seeing value in the detritus of modern life.

Tzara chose two artworks by Miró for inclusion in “Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting.” The first (Fig. 3.12), whose whereabouts are currently unknown, consists of three overlapping irregularly shaped circular pieces of paper of varying sizes at the center of the composition and penciled elements. The tan circle in the upper left and the dark one in the lower right echo one another in scale but contrast in color. Miró inscribes fishes overlapping and adjacent to each of these circles in thin wavering lines. A small motif of a chair, visible in the lower left medium-sized circle, reappears in one of Miro’s illustrations for *L’Arbre des voyageurs*. Lines emanate in a conical form from beneath it, extending to the far left of the page. The overlapping curvilinear forms create a sense of wave-like motion on the page, despite its stasis, further reinforced by the crinkling of the paper as the glue beneath each layer dried.

The other (Fig. 3.13) similarly consists of tarpaper, flocked paper, paper, and conte crayon. Miró juxtaposed texture and color, layering rectangles and irregular carved circular forms. The thin undulating charcoal lines drawn over the entire composition unite the two layers beneath while emphasizing a sense of recession and depth. The bottommost piece is a hue of green so dark it appeared black in the reproduction in *Cahiers d’art*. Both untitled works from 1929 were part of series of twenty-two, large scale collages undertaken between July and November of the same year.<sup>379</sup> The minimal color palette and abstract forms stand in contrast to the early *papiers collés* by Braque and

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<sup>379</sup> Anne Umland, “Collages, 1929,” *Joan Miró: Painting and Anti-Painting* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 69-70.

Picasso depicting human subjects or interior spaces that Tzara also chose to reproduce with his essay. These contrasts serve to simultaneously underscore Miró's position as among the key artist to develop the implications of papier collé toward the assassination of painting.

Between 1930 and 1932, Miró embarked upon a series of sculptures incorporating wood panels and blocks. While Jim Coddington, former Chief Conservator at The Museum of Modern Art, understands these works as investigations of the frame used in traditional canvas paintings, I believe these experiments must also be connected to the wood sculptures on view in large quantities at Paris during that time.<sup>380</sup> For example, *Object* (Fig. 3.14) created in the summer and autumn of 1931, evokes several different aspects of African artworks. The use of white paint evokes the *beete* that belonged to Tzara (Fig. 3.15), while the nails and bones as well as multiple compartments evoke the *nkisi* included in the Musée d'ethnographie du Trocadéro's temporary installation of the following year in conjunction with the International Colonial Exposition at the Bois de Vincennes (Fig. 3.16). Indeed, Miró began *Object* shortly after the opening of the exposition, discussed further below.

Another form of power object in addition to *minikisi*, have attracted attention from Europeans due to their amorphous forms and unusual materials. The term *Boliw* (sing. *boli*) refers to large altars composed of diverse and metaphysically potent substances, created to harness vast resources of supernatural energy, termed *nyama*, for social and ritual purposes. Yet, African makers also limited access to their arts, especially those

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<sup>380</sup> Jim Coddington, "The Language of Materials," *Joan Miró: Painting and Anti-Painting* (New York, NY: The Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 25.

packed with potent and rare materials that could harm innocent spectators. Miró may have been familiar with this *boliv* (Fig. 3.17), acquired by Frantz de Zeltner in 1910, and donated to the Museum of Man (*Musée de l'homme*) around 1930. However, these works were less well known and not as widely collected until after the Trocadéro Museum's Dakar-Djibouti Expedition led by ethnographer Marcel Griaule and surrealist poet Michel Leiris between 1930 and 1934.<sup>381</sup>

Indeed, Leiris's description of Miró's work in the spring/summer 1926 edition of the self-consciously avant-garde, international American literary and art journal *The Little Review* further demonstrates how Miró's endeavors in collage and assemblage were tied to the intertwining of the discourses of ethnography and modernist art.<sup>382</sup>

Formerly the anxious tribes of men would bury their nail peelings and their fallen hairs in fear of sorcery; for they believed that these particles of themselves contained their whole vital spirit. Later, geologists succeeded in reconstructing the enormous skeletons of extinct animals from a piece of bone, perhaps buried for several millennia. Today there is a new race of men who, from the double world of flesh and spirit, retain only the traces, vestiges of structures which a valueless intellect can never render firm. The slightest notations they make are sufficient witness to their love. Their brains may be exactly compared to those pictures which the poor adore, pictures made with locks of hair snipped from a whole family of brides, or fragments from the martyred bones of saints, buried under ruined cloisters. There is no question of proving, constructing. The state of mind is a new fetichism [sic], which demands nothing but the perfect adhesion of the heart to any sort of object, free of symbol, but reflecting like the tiniest cell the infinite harmony of all the universe. A man like Miró belongs to that sorcerer race whose feats seem often ridiculous because of their bizarre tone and their air of coming from somewhere else.<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> Upon their return, Leiris published an account of their activities in a book he titled *Phantom Africa (L'Afrique fantôme)* which has recently been translated into English by Brent Hays Edwards (Calcutta, London, and New York: Seagull Books, 2017).

<sup>382</sup> The same issue of *The Little Review* included two poems by Tzara in English. Tristan Tzara, "Anonymous Letter" and "Noces," *The Little Review* (Spring/Summer 1926): 25-26.

<sup>383</sup> Michel Leiris, "Joan Miró," *The Little Review*, trans. Malcolm Cowley (Spring/Summer 1926): 9.

Here, Leiris utilizes the same terminology that Tzara would use several years later for the newspaper elements of collage to describe the mentality of the artist-sorcerer who identifies, creates, and fixates on objects emblematic of universal truths.

Tzara's emphasis on collage's efficacious properties aligns with Georges Bataille's understanding of surrealist art as what Rosalind Krauss terms a refusal of metaphor, also tied to his interest in ethnography and works from Africa.<sup>384</sup> Krauss claims that, "Bataille's fetishism is of course the ethnographic rather than the Freudian kind with the fetish not conceived as above all a substitute for what is missing but as the real power of real objects."<sup>385</sup> She establishes a parallel between Bataille's extensive use of photographs in the journal *Documents* to Miró's 1925 painting "This is the Color of my Dreams (*Ceci est la couleur de mes rêves*)."<sup>386</sup> Compellingly connecting the splotch of blue pigment in the lower right corner of the painting to the inscription of the word, "photo" in the upper left, Krauss situates indexicality centrally in Bataille's understanding of art and life.<sup>386</sup> In other words, Bataille and his group of surrealists sought to transpose the efficacy of objects that they believed to be held by African peoples into European artistic creation.

Einstein's language in his review of Miró's exhibition at Galerie Pierre published in Bataille's journal *Documents* echoes Tzara's. Einstein asserts that Miró's collages take the viewer "back to myths and games of chance."<sup>387</sup> Einstein similarly connects

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<sup>384</sup> See also Linda Steer, "Photographic appropriation, ethnography, and the surrealist other," *The Comparatist* 32 (2008): 63+. Gale Academic OneFile (accessed March 19, 2021). [https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A178676318/AONE?u=upenn\\_main&sid=AONE&xid=bbdaa1d3](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A178676318/AONE?u=upenn_main&sid=AONE&xid=bbdaa1d3).

<sup>385</sup> Rosalind Krauss, "Michel, Bataille et moi," *October* 68 (spring 1994): 11.

<sup>386</sup> Krauss, "Michel, Bataille et moi," 14.

<sup>387</sup> "Les collages de Miró nous ramènent aux mythes et aux jeux de jetons." Carl Einstein, "Joan Miró – papiers collés a la Galerie Pierre," *Documents* (1930): 243. Translation mine.

religiosity with contemporary life utilizing Marxist terminology, writing, “Geometry as a conspiracy, to escape the inexplicable *dialectic* of the gods, whose most significant gifts are madness and military regulations. The unequivocal candor.”<sup>388</sup>

In “A Propos de Joan Miró” published in *Cahiers d’art* sixteen years later, Tzara similarly described Miró’s ability to represent the essential aspects of life: “Miró is one of those beings who have touched on the primordial feeling of existence, in the sense that life has appeared to him quite naturally as a window open to himself.”<sup>389</sup> Tzara here twists the Renaissance trope of the painting as a window onto the world, identifying the avant-garde painter as capable of a universalizing self-reflexivity. Returning to Miró’s 1931 interview published in *Ahora*, one finds a concise summation of these themes. Miró asserted that, “Poetry, plastically expressed, speaks its own language,” a language understood across space and time.<sup>390</sup>

### Collage as Organizing Principle – African and Oceanic Art at the Galerie Pigalle

The year following his publication on Oceanic art for *Cahiers d’art*, Tzara harnessed juxtaposition of materials and modes of expression – which he positioned as the source of collage’s generative power – as the driving curatorial principle for the

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<sup>388</sup> “La géométrie comme conjuration, pour échapper à la dialectique inexplicable des dieux, dont les cadeaux les plus conséquents sont la folie et le règlement militaire. La candeur sans équivoque.” Carl Einstein, “Joan Miró – papiers collés a la Galerie Pierre,” *Documents* (1930): 243. Emphasis and translation mine.

<sup>389</sup> “Miró est de ces êtres qui ont touché au sentiment primordial de l’existence, en ce sens que la vie lui est apparue tout naturellement comme une fenêtre ouverte sur lui-même.” Tristan Tzara, “A Propos de Joan Miró,” *Cahiers d’art* 15: no. 3 (1940). Reproduced in *Œuvres Complètes IV*, ed. Henri Béhar (Paris: Flammarion, 1975), 433. Translation mine.

Tzara’s only other criticism of Miró’s work, entitled “Joan Miró et la interrogation naissante,” was published in *Derrière le miroir* in the November/December issue of 1948, marking Miró’s return to France following the conclusion of the Second World War. Tristan Tzara, “Joan Miró et l’interrogation naissante,” *Œuvres Complètes IV*, ed. Henri Béhar (Paris: Flammarion, 1975), 427-429.

<sup>390</sup> Peter Watson, “Joan Miró,” *Horizon* (August 1941): 131.

*Exposition d'art d'africain et d'art océanien* at the Galerie Pigalle.<sup>391</sup> The gallery was located in the basement of the Pigalle Theater, constructed at 12 rue Pigalle in 1923 with funding from the Baron Henri de Rothschild. The art deco structure seated 1,800 people, featured a stage measuring 22 meters wide and an orchestra pit that could accommodate 80 musicians, and was fully electrified with 210,000 watts of power.<sup>392</sup> Rothschild had hoped to create a museum in the building; instead he opened the gallery and hired the playwright Valentin Marquetty as director of exhibitions.<sup>393</sup> Marquetty invited members of the Excursion Society for Amateur Photographers (*Société d'excursions des amateurs de photographie*) to visit the show of African and Oceanic art on March 29, 1930; today their negatives are the only extant documentation of the installation.<sup>394</sup>

In one photograph (Fig. 3.19), the structural character of the gallery – what one might term today an “alternative exhibition space” – is evident. The ceilings appear low, with the supporting beams and exposed pipes further creating a sense of confinement. Tzara, Ratton, and Loeb arranged the objects in varied configurations; some stood singly on pedestals, others were hung on the walls or rested directly on the floor, while still others appeared in groups within cases. The curatorial team covered the walls in burlap or canvas, and placed Congolese textiles along the front and sides of some of the cases.

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<sup>391</sup> The scale of the Pigalle show, with the majority of works never before exhibited or discussed in the emerging field of ethnography made it a watershed moment. Yaëlle Biro, “From Pigalle (1930) to the Maison Des Artistes (1911): A Genealogy in Reverse,” *Galerie Pigalle Afrique Océanie - 1930. Une Exposition Mythique*, eds. Charles-Wesley Hourdé and Nicolas Rolland (Paris: Somogy editions d’art, 2018), 33.

<sup>392</sup> Ruth Hommelen and Philippe Marcerou. “Théâtre Pigalle: L’ambition des Rothschild,” *Galerie Pigalle Afrique Océanie - 1930, Une Exposition Mythique*, eds. Charles-Wesley Hourdé and Nicolas Rolland (Paris: Somogy editions d’art, 2018), 14, 16.

<sup>393</sup> Hommelen and Marcerou. “Théâtre Pigalle: L’ambition des Rothschild,” 17-18.

<sup>394</sup> Marion Perceval, “The Société Excursionniste Photographs at the Théâtre Pigalle Gallery,” *Galerie Pigalle Afrique Océanie - 1930. Une Exposition Mythique*, eds. Charles-Wesley Hourdé and Nicolas Rolland (Paris: Somogy editions d’art, 2018), 94.

The unknown photographer from the Excursion Society captured an important part of the exhibition in another photograph (Fig. 3.20), namely the unmarked break between the African and Oceanic sections of the show. Masks were arranged above the doorway, thereby maximizing the space of the gallery but also evoking the installation techniques of the early dada exhibitions in Zurich. The curators deployed scalar variations to great effect and placed the standing figure from Abomey that dwarfs Tzara's *kwele* mask on the wall behind it.

Further, the built-in features of the space informed the installation strategies of the team. Another photograph (Fig. 3.21) shows the series of pedestals that mimic the set of shallow steps joining one room to another. Similarly, the image demonstrates the curators' flexibility with installation techniques for objects of the same genre: for example, one Kota reliquary sculpture rests on the highest pedestal, while three others of varying sizes hang directly on the wall.

An image of one area of the African section of the exhibition (Fig. 3.22) demonstrates most dramatically how, within general cultural sections, Tzara, Ratton, and Loeb eschewed chronology, geography, material, genre, style, and scale in their arrangements. Commemorative portrait heads cast in bronze from the Kingdom of Benin range alongside masquerade ensembles of wood and raffia from Guinea and full figure reliquary sculptures from Gabon.

Although the organizers maintained a spatial division between the cultures of Africa and the Pacific, the configurations take on greater clarity when considered in terms of their social functionality. For example, reliquary objects belonging to Kota and Fang-speaking communities are grouped with the bronze statues from Kingdom of Benin (Fig.



3.22). Biro rhetorically asks whether the exhibition strategies of categories-breaking employed by Tzara and his colleagues at the Galerie Pigalle can be tied to surrealist approaches to design, but I believe another principle is at work. While the inclusion of African objects in installations of European modernist art is frequently touted as a surrealist innovation, this practice can in fact be directly traced back to the early exhibitions in Germany and the United States pairing African figural sculpture with cubist portraits by Picasso, which may have informed the first dadaist exhibition in 1917 organized by Tzara himself, discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation.

The exhibition design of *The Truth About The Colonies (La Verité sur les Colonies)* (Fig. 3.23), organized by the Bretonian surrealists in conjunction with the French Communist Party the year after the exhibition at the Pigalle Theater, stands in stark contrast to the undertaking at the Galerie Pigalle, and has been characterized as “baldly propagandistic.”<sup>395</sup> Modeled after the Soviet Union’s new antireligious museums, *The Truth About the Colonies*, held at the Soviet Palace (*Palais des Soviets*) in Paris’s 9<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, juxtaposed phrases from Marx and Lenin with African, Asian, and Oceanic objects as a critical response to the International Colonial Exposition (*Exposition Coloniale Internationale*).<sup>396</sup> While both *The Truth About the Colonies* and the Pigalle exhibition used small labels for ethnographic information, the surrealists’ 1931 exhibition framed African objects as exemplary of the ills of colonialism, rather than as artworks worthy of appreciation on their own terms.

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<sup>395</sup> Adam Jolles, “Colonists by Vocation,” *The Curatorial Avant-Garde* (State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013), 137.

<sup>396</sup> Jody Blake, “The Truth About the Colonies, 1931: Art Indigene in the Service of the Revolution,” *Oxford Art Journal* 25, no. 1 (2002): 35–58.

The Trocadéro Ethnographic Museum organized a temporary exhibition to coincide with the International Colonial Exposition (Fig. 3.16) similar to both the Galerie Pigalle and *Truth About the Colonies* exhibitions.<sup>397</sup> Here, as in the surrealists' installation at the Soviet Palace, objects were arranged according to type, and featured large identifying labels, in contrast to the absence of labels at Pigalle. While curator Georges-Henri Rivière used cases and pedestals in a manner analogous to that of the installation at the Galerie Pigalle, he placed objects of similar heights and diameters together, in contrast to Tzara's display techniques that stressed heterogeneity.

Comparing Tzara's installation at the basement gallery of the Pigalle Theater to the 1931 exhibitions by the Trocadéro Ethnographic Museum in the French pavilion at the International Colonial Exposition and the Surrealists in the Soviet palace further underscores the way in which Tzara's curatorial approach – and indeed his choice of venue – differed from that of his contemporaries. Foregrounding neither pedagogy nor ideology, but instead emphasizing the singular artistic qualities of each object, the installation for the gallery at the Pigalle Theater stands in tension with the organizers' call for placing African material cultures within their own art historical trajectories as outlined in the introductory remarks of the catalogue.

The Pigalle exhibition organizers advocated for a historically-grounded approach to African and Oceanic objects, asserting that African and Oceanic artworks should be

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<sup>397</sup> Founded in 1880, the Trocadéro Ethnographic Museum was arranged in order to emphasize the quantity of objects in the collections, in line with the accumulationist rhetoric of colonialism. Poorly lit, improperly heated, and disorganized, the museum fell further into disrepair after the entire staff was mobilized during the First World War. Paul Rivet inherited the museum from its first director, Ernest-Théodore Hamy in 1928. Rivet's pleas for a new space were successful: the museum was emptied and would reopen a decade later as the Museum of Man (*Musée de l'homme*). In the interim, in addition to the 1931 exhibition, the Trocadéro arranged a second temporary exhibition in 1937 in conjunction with the International Exhibition at the Palais de Chaillot.

situated within their respective contexts, rather than assigned a timeless past. They observe that,

If we can generally specify the geographical origin of the works - and this we owe in large measure to ethnography - we know almost nothing about the development of these arts in time and the influences that have governed them. The time is not far off when ethnography, which until now has been concerned with the artistic manifestations of these peoples, will have to abandon this subject to archeology and art history.<sup>398</sup>

While acknowledging the role of European missionaries and officials in documenting the sites of origin for the works included at the Pigalle exhibition (which ranged across several centuries), their language in the introduction to the catalogue for *Exposition d'art africain et d'art océanien* implicitly questioned anthropological studies as adequate sources of information about the cultural context for the objects on display in the gallery of the Pigalle Theater.

Tzara was undoubtedly aware of the intellectual limitations and physical violence of ethnographic study within the colonial context. The show included objects acquired during two well-known European military campaigns in West Africa: the conquering of the kingdom of Abomey by the French in 1892 and the Kingdom of Benin by the British in 1897. Furthermore, the brutality of King Leopold's regime in the Congo was well documented and directly connected to the Tervuren Museum in Brussels, whose collections were the envy of the curators at the Trocadéro, spurring the Dakar-Djibouti Mission of 1931, the same year as Tzara's publication in *Cahiers d'art*. Moreover,

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<sup>398</sup> "Si nous pouvons généralement préciser la provenance géographique des œuvres - et ceci nous le devons en grande partie à l'ethnographie - nous ne savons presque rien sur le développement de ces arts dans le temps et sur les influences qui les ont régis. Le temps n'est pas lointain où, l'ethnographie, qui seule jusqu'ici s'est occupée des manifestations artistiques de ces peuples, devra abandonner ce sujet à l'archéologie et à l'histoire de l'art." Tzara and Ratton, *Exposition d'art africain et d'art océanien*, 15.

anthropologists such as Marcel Griaule and Michel Leiris explored and debated the ethical and psychological dimensions of fieldwork in the pages of *Documents*, wherein Bataille presented his idea of *l'informe* that shaped Tzara's choice of objects in his essay on collage, as demonstrated above.<sup>399</sup>

### Conclusion

In "Pasted Paper or The Proverb in Painting," Tzara devised a complex theory about the relationship between collage, poetry, African *boliv* and *minkisi* predicated on their shared transformation of quotidian materials into significant object-experiences. Tzara and the surrealists' interest in collage during the interwar period was precipitated by a critical impulse in opposition to artistic tradition similar to that which had motivated the medium's very invention. However, this generation's life experiences led them to an entirely different understanding of the role of art in contemporary life. This latter group embodied contradiction: draft dodgers and soldiers; anti-colonial agitators and avid collectors of imperialist spoils; poets, painters, and political activists, they created works that constituted another thread within modernism.

Tzara's theory of collage is a synthesis of his own understanding of poetry as an innovative practitioner, with his knowledge of African and Pacific islands cultures generated through ethnographic study. Further, Tzara's perspective stems from his interest in the quotidian shared with the so-called dissident surrealists Georges Bataille

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<sup>399</sup> Marcel Griaule, "Un Coup de fusil," and "Poterie," *Documents* 2:1 (1930); Michel Leiris, "L'Oeil de l'ethnographe," *Documents* 2:7 (1930). See Julia Kelly, "Classifying: The Irritation Objects and its disciplines," *Art, Ethnography and the Life of Objects, Paris, c. 1925-35* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2007), 40-67.

and Michel Leiris, as well as his commitment to political activism. Looking back to the year prior to the publication of his essay in *Cahiers d'art* demonstrates how Tzara transposed the collage principle of juxtaposition into his curatorial work for the exhibition of African and Oceanic art at the Pigalle Theater, even as his ideas about collage stemmed from his understanding of the materials and epistemologies of West African and Pacific Ocean communities represented by those objects.

“Pasted Paper or the Proverb in Painting” traverses the line between poetry and prose, and its seemingly disjointed organization represents, yet again, the way in which the principle of collage was central to Tzara’s own practice as a poet, critic, and organizer of objects in space. Indeed, Tzara’s essay stands as a veritable collage of ideas, its complexity of structure and the poet’s use of oblique syntax perhaps accounting for its relative obscurity in the scholarship on twentieth century collage. While Tzara’s theoretical framework for understanding collage as a synthesis of universal symbols articulated through common materials in shocking juxtapositions represents an approach aligned with the group of so-called dissident surrealists, his strong emphasis on the processual experiences of creation and apprehension sets him apart from his contemporaries.

## CHAPTER 4 - Historiography of Erasure: African Art and Dada at The Museum of Modern Art, 1935-1936

In her 1998 book *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism*, Sieglinde Lemke recounts Black American philosopher and activist W.E.B. DuBois's recollection of the shock and excitement he felt listening to the commencement speech of German anthropologist Franz Boas at Atlanta University, focused on the various empires of the Sahara.<sup>400</sup> While scholars have since responded to Lemke's call to consider how Black American artists utilized African works, their research remains largely disregarded by those studying white artists who were also interested in those cultural forms.<sup>401</sup> The roots of these segregated histories of modernism can be located in the foundational moments of the 1930s, and are inextricably tied to both the foreclosing of modernity for the unidentified African artists responsible for creating the works that modernists turned to for inspiration and the prioritizing of durable objects over more ephemeral forms such as print and performance.

Extending the parameters of Lemke's work just beyond 1934, the year in which Nancy Cunard published *Negro: An Anthology*, enables us to discern one of the first instances of these dual erasures: the moment in which African and European

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<sup>400</sup> Sieglinde Lemke, "Introduction: Was Modernism Passing?," *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), 5-7.

<sup>401</sup> See: Theresa Leininger-Miller, "Education of a modernist: Hale Woodruff in France, 1927-1931," *New Negro Artists in Paris: African American Painters and Sculptors in the City of Light, 1922-1934* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 105-139. Cheryl Finley, "The Mask as Muse: The Influence of African Art on the Life and Career of Lois Mailou Jones," *NKA: Journal of Contemporary African Art* 29 (Fall 2011): 140-151. Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, "Creating a New Negro Art in America: Relocating Sargent Johnson's African Inspired Art," *Transition* 108 (2012): 74-87. The most comprehensive book length study that acts as a corrective to these segregated histories is Joshua Cohen's *The Black Art Renaissance: African Sculpture and Modernism Across Continents* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2020).

contemporary art was exhibited beneath the roof of what would become one of the art world's most influential institutions, New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). MoMA's exhibitions of 1935 and 1936 exposed the United States public to African works primarily from the collections of artists and intellectuals of European descent, with *African Negro Art*, and then to dada and surrealism, with *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*. MoMA's prioritization of object-based artworks created by a singular artist for a single viewer over dada's ephemeral initiatives must be understood as inextricably tied to the promotion of interpretations of African material cultures that disregarded indigenous epistemes in order to promote the transformation of these works from so-called ethnographic artifacts into modernist artworks.

The curator of *African Negro Art*, James Johnson Sweeney, replicated the canon established by Tzara, Loeb and Ratton in the 1930 exhibition at the Galerie Pigalle, discussed in the previous chapter. Displayed in the "white cube" that would come to characterize the institution, the alleged elevation of African works from ethnographic artifacts to fine art resulted in an erasure of the agency of their creators through the eschewal of contextual information in tandem with an emphasis on their role as formal models for European artists. Sweeney's approach thus further transformed dynamic masquerade ensembles into static sculptures.

Furthermore, while the catalogue produced for *African Negro Art* listed one recent exhibition organized by the founder of the New Negro movement, Rhodes Scholar and Howard University professor Alain Locke, Black Americans' collections and curatorial projects have largely been omitted from subsequent analyses of the development of

African art studies.<sup>402</sup> Historians have instead emphasized MoMA's efforts to engage with Black Americans across the country through a traveling exhibition of photographic enlargements of objects included in the show, and positioned these initiatives as progressive. However, the museum's endeavor necessitates more nuanced analysis.

MoMA's next exhibition, *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, organized by director Alfred H. Barr, Jr. also rested on a limited understanding of artistic practice. As with *African Negro Art*, Tzara's presence can be discerned transitively in *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*: his personal loans constituted half of the entire dada section, and the papers from his archive informed the catalogue essays written by artist and critic Georges Hugnet. Nevertheless, despite Tzara's own influential publications and performances, Barr's selection for *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* centered the object-based working methods of surrealism, thus erasing one of the central components of dada's radical tactics: performance.

Indeed, while works like *The Matchbox*, discussed in chapter two, were often unrecorded, Barr chose to omit photographic documentation of the Galerie Montaigne and other dada events from both the installation and the catalogue, instead positioning the movement as a springboard for surrealism.<sup>403</sup> Furthermore, Barr created a surrealist

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<sup>402</sup> Jeffrey C. Stewart, *The New Negro: The Life of Alain Locke* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019).

<sup>403</sup> Tzara lent two photographs of his plays, *Mouchoir de Nuages* of 192? (FADS loan 36.1529) and the 1923 restaging of *La Cœur à gaz* (FADS loan 36.1530) but neither made it into the catalogue and it is unclear if Barr exhibited them at all. Museum of Modern Art Archives, MoMA EXHS 55.5, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



taxonomy in which Asian, Black and Latinx artists were positioned outside of the movement, propagating a segregated and incomplete understanding of modernism.<sup>404</sup>

### Creating a Canon of African Art Through Exhibitions

Alain Locke's review of *African Negro Art* for *The American Magazine of Art* offers contemporary evidence of the way in which the canon of sub-Saharan African art was being constructed through exhibitions.<sup>405</sup> Offering a synthetic overview of the various stylistic and regional areas represented in MoMA's exhibition, Locke tailored his review to an audience perhaps most familiar with the works held by the Barnes Foundation in Merion, Pennsylvania and the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, calling out the French Sudan section given its dearth in North American collections.<sup>406</sup> Locke also mentions the inclusion of works from Cameroon, recently added to the corpus of classical sub-Saharan African art in the 1930 Galerie Pigalle exhibition, as discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>407</sup> Citing the *nkisi* belonging to Tzara as an object of particular aesthetic merit, Locke recapitulated the accepted categories and attributions of these works at the time – what Sidney Kasfir has since termed the 'one tribe, one style' paradigm which would eventually be codified by then curatorial assistant Robert Goldwater at the Museum of Primitive Art.<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> Two exceptions are David Alfaro Siquieros's *Collective Suicide* of 1935 (checklist no. 577), and Isamu Noguchi's *Miss Expanding Universe* of 1930 (checklist no. 569).

<sup>405</sup> Alain Locke, "African Art: Classical Style," *The American Magazine of Art* 28, no. 5 (May 1935): 276.

<sup>406</sup> Locke, "African Art: Classical Style," 274.

<sup>407</sup> Locke, "African Art: Classical Style," 276.

<sup>408</sup> Sidney L. Kasfir "African Art and Authenticity: A Text with a Shadow," *African Arts* 25: 3 (April 1992): 40-53. Robert Goldwater, *Bambara Sculpture from the Western Sudan* (New York: University Publishers on behalf of the Museum of Primitive Art, 1960); *Senfo sculpture from West Africa* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society on behalf of the Museum of Primitive Art, 1964). See Susan

As Locke observed, *African Negro Art* replicated the expanded canon established by Tzara, Ratton, and Loeb five years prior at the Galerie Pigalle. With just forty-six out of the total of 603 objects, Tzara cannot be considered a primary lender to *African Negro Art*, but his influence over the exhibition was nevertheless significant. The works in the 1930 exhibition at the Pigalle Theater became desiderata for Sweeney, the curator selected by Barr to organize the show.<sup>409</sup> His access to information about the exhibition was primarily derived from the catalogue mailed by Ratton and his colleague Louis Carré, easily the most successful Parisian dealers of so-called *arts primitifs* at the time.<sup>410</sup> While it seems Sweeney had, in fact, met Tzara as early as 1933, no evidence suggests they communicated regarding the show aside from the usual administrative correspondence.<sup>411</sup> Thus, while Virginia-Lee Webb's assertion that Sweeney may have seen the exhibition of African and Oceanic art at the Galerie Pigalle seems tenuous, the curator's ample access to written information indubitably served to inform his selection

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Elizabeth Gagliardi's essay, "Senoufo Sculpture from West Africa: An Influential Exhibition at The Museum of Primitive Art, New York, 1963" on the Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History for an analysis of these two exhibitions' impact on the development of African art history. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/smpa/hd\\_smpa.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/smpa/hd_smpa.htm) (originally published January 2010, last revised March 2016). See also Kate Ezra, "Collecting Art at New York's Museum of Primitive Art," *Representing Africa in American Art Museums: A Century of Collecting and Display*, ed. Kathleen Berzock and Christa Clark (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2010), 122-149.

<sup>409</sup> Virginia-Lee Webb, "Paris/New York: Of Particular Interest, Galerie Pigalle," *Galerie Pigalle Afrique Océanie - 1930. Une Exposition Mythique*, ed. Charles-Wesley Hourdé and Nicolas Rolland (Paris: Somogy éditions d'art, 2018), 150.

<sup>410</sup> Correspondence in the exhibition file indicates that Louis Carré sent James Johnson Sweeney a catalogue of the Pigalle exhibition in December of 1934 (see letter from Carré to Sweeney dated December 26, 1934.) Ratton sent a second copy of the publication to Sweeney the following month (see letter from Ratton to Sweeney dated January 5, 1935). Museum of Modern Art Archives, MoMA EXHS 39.5, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

<sup>411</sup> A letter from James Johnson Sweeney to Tristan Tzara refers to the curator's visit to Tzara's home on Avenue Junot the year prior in the company of Hans Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp. Letter from Sweeney to Tzara dated November 7, 1934. Museum of Modern Art Archives, MoMA EXHS 39.4, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

of objects for the exhibition at MoMA.<sup>412</sup> Indeed, Tzara's personal collections exemplify the transmission of this newly expanded canon from Paris to New York: thirteen of the artworks initially included at Pigalle were lent to MoMA.

Although Locke did not discuss the fact in his article for *The American Magazine of Art*, the works selected for *African Negro Art* differed significantly from those he chose for the exhibition of The Blondiau-Theatre Arts Collection of Primitive Art at the New Arts Circle, located on 57<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan eight years prior.<sup>413</sup> As Helen M. Shannon's meticulous research has demonstrated, Locke secured the support of Edith J.R. Isaacs, the editor of the influential journal *Theatre Arts Monthly*, for a Harlem Museum which would link the New Negro artists to their ancestral heritage on the African continent.<sup>414</sup> In 1926, Isaacs acquired the entire collection of approximately 1,000 works from present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Congo belonging to the Belgian photographer and collector Raoul Blondiau with the understanding that half of it would be purchased by the museum.<sup>415</sup> The exhibition at the New Arts Circle, which ran from February 7 to March 5, 1927, was intended to jumpstart fundraising for the Harlem Museum of Art.<sup>416</sup>

Of the five hundred objects on view, fifteen were masks, forty-one were classified as "fetishes," and twenty-five were miniature versions of both masks and *minkisi*. In contrast, the anthropomorphic sculptures that dominated the subsequent exhibitions at

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<sup>412</sup> Webb, "Paris/New York," 161.

<sup>413</sup> Alain Locke, "Blondiau-Theatre Arts Collection of Primitive African Art," *Theatre Arts Monthly* (1927), unpaginated. Robert Goldwater Library O2 N553, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

<sup>414</sup> Helen M. Shannon, "The Blondiau-Theatre Arts Collection of Primitive African Art," *Tribal Art*, Special Issue No. 3 – African Art, New York, and the Avant-Garde (2013): 51.

<sup>415</sup> Yaëlle Biro, Footnote 267, "Amérique: l'art africain en héritage," *Fabriquer le regard: Marchands, réseaux et objets d'art africains à l'aube du XXe siècle* (Paris: Les Presses du réel, 2019).

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*

both the Galerie Pigalle and MoMA constituted less than one-fifth of the total artworks Locke selected. The remainder were classified as decorative or utilitarian objects consisting of drinking vessels, containers, stools, staffs, headrests, musical instruments and armaments.<sup>417</sup> Unfortunately, despite vigorous fundraising efforts and a wide-sweeping publicity campaign, discussed further below, Locke was unable to raise the funds for the Harlem Museum of Art, primarily as a result of the economic depression following the stock market crash in 1929. The collection was subsequently sold and has been dispersed among private and public institutions; for example, this *ngady mwaash* (Fig. 4.1) currently resides in the Art and Artifacts Division of the Schomburg Collections at the New York Public Library. Had Locke's project come to fruition, it would have been the first museum anywhere devoted solely to African art.<sup>418</sup>

Tzara's personal collection included works similar to those collected and displayed in the Harlem Museum of Art fundraising exhibition organized by Locke. For example, Tzara chose to include this cup (Fig. 4.2) in the exhibition at the Galerie Pigalle, and reproduced it in the catalogue as well (number 249). Tzara also possessed a Malian stool (Fig.4.3) whose whereabouts are currently unknown, and a miniature mask (Fig. 4.4) now in a private collection; to my knowledge neither of these objects were included in public exhibitions. Furthermore, Tzara amassed an impressive collection of at

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<sup>417</sup> Helen M. Shannon, "Chapter V – Toward the Harlem Museum of African Art: New Negroes, The Primitive and The Folk," *From "African Savages" to "Ancestral Legacy": Race and Cultural Nationalism in the American Modernist Reception of African Art*, PhD. Dissertation (New York, NY: Columbia University, 1999), 253.

<sup>418</sup> Shannon, "Chapter V," 190.

least two dozen handwoven raffia textiles from what is today the Democratic Republic of the Congo, none of which were selected for *African Negro Art*.<sup>419</sup>

Tzara's textiles were displayed proudly in the small library in his home located at 15 Avenue Junot in Montmartre, designed by the Austrian architect Adolf Loos (Fig. 3.2).<sup>420</sup> Located on level "B" of the house, the salon exemplifies Loos's concept of the Raumplan, which Pilar Parcerisas describes as "a continuous sequence of spaces, nuanced vertically, with heights varying according to use, or horizontally, by means of the enfilade, with a series of rooms leading in to one another."<sup>421</sup> The few photographs that exist of the home were taken in 1930 by an unidentified photographer for the Czech architect Heinrich Kulka's volume devoted to Loos's projects. Although generally averse to photographing his buildings, Loos was, in fact, involved in those created for Kulka's book.<sup>422</sup>

In the library at the Maison Tzara, the low horsehair-upholstered bench invited relaxed contemplation of the works in the surrounding display units of black lacquered wood. The cup included at the Galerie Pigalle exhibition is nestled on the floor in between the left-hand corner of the bookshelf and the adjacent cabinet. An astute observer will notice the Malian stool on top of a pile of raffia in the foreground of the photograph – clear evidence of Kulka's staging for the book. The Congolese fabrics are arranged two by two to create a series of vertical rectangular forms placed slightly apart

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<sup>419</sup> Eleven of these textiles were reproduced in Henry Clouzot, *Tissus nègres* (Paris: Librairie des arts décoratifs, 1931).

<sup>420</sup> Ralf Bock, "Works - Tristan Tzara House (1925-26)," *Adolf Loos - Works and Projects* (Milan, Italy: Skira, 2007), 228-235.

<sup>421</sup> Pilar Parcerisas, "Adolf Loos, Private Spaces," *Adolf Loos: Private Spaces*, ed. Pilar Velez (Barcelona, Spain: Museu del Disseny de Barcelona, 2017), 21.

<sup>422</sup> Beatriz Colomina, "Interior," *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 271.

from one another all around the low-ceilinged room, reinforcing the sense of enclosure and coziness. Tzara's use of these textiles as form of wallpaper in the small salon represents a transformation of what would have originally been used as currency, though some were manufactured solely for export to European markets.<sup>423</sup>

Kulka's image of Tzara's home in Paris commissioned for his book and James van der Zee's photograph of the The Blondiau-Theatre Arts Collection at the 135<sup>th</sup> Street Library in New York – discussed further below – offer important evidence of the areas of overlap between collectors of African and European descent, enabling us to read against the grain of MoMA's 1935 presentation.

Of the Black American newspaper outlets with national circulation, only the *New York Amsterdam News*, the *Chicago Defender*, and the *Baltimore Afro-American* covered the exhibition at MoMA.<sup>424</sup> The unidentified reporter for *The New York Amsterdam News* commented on the scale of the exhibition and identified artworks in three specific media – bronze, ivory, and textiles – as well as “implements and weapons.”<sup>425</sup> Other exhibitions devoted to African art received more in-depth coverage. For example, Herbert Seligman wrote a detailed article on the exhibition held at The Brooklyn Museum in 1923 and Gwendolyn Bennett reviewed the exhibition at the 138<sup>th</sup> Street “Y” that same year.<sup>426</sup> Not

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<sup>423</sup> Vanessa Drake Morgana, *Weaving Abstraction: Kuba Textiles and the Woven art of Central Africa* (Washington, DC: The Textile Museum, 2011).

<sup>424</sup> “Great African Art Show Planned,” *New York Amsterdam News*, March 9, 1935; “Pupils View African Art,” *The Baltimore Afro-American*, April 20, 1935; “African Art Exhibit,” *The Chicago Defender*, December 21, 1935. All accessed via ProQuest. Unfortunately, both *The New York Age* and the *Atlanta Daily World* are not digitized and thus I was unable to consult them as a result of the widespread library closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I plan to finish this aspect of my research in my book.

<sup>425</sup> “Great African Art Show Planned,” *New York Amsterdam News*, March 9, 1935.

<sup>426</sup> Herbert J. Seligman, “Primitive Negro Sculpture on View in Brooklyn Art Museum,” *The New York Amsterdam News* (May 16, 1923): 12. Gwendolyn Bennett, “Toward An Art Center?: Ancient and Modern Negro Art Shown Here, Local Group Sponsors Extensive Show at 138<sup>th</sup> Street ‘Y’,” *The New York Amsterdam News* (March 23, 1935): 9.

only were Black journalists understandably more interested in initiatives generated by members of their communities, they gave greater attention to exhibitions organized by white curators, like Stewart Culin at The Brooklyn Museum, that prioritized the types of works seen by Black anthropologists, art historians, and critics as valuable.

Sweeney included The Blondiau-Theatre Arts Collection show at The New Art Circle in the list of important exhibitions, and recognized Locke personally in his acknowledgements at the beginning of the catalogue for *African Negro Art*.<sup>427</sup> The artworks originally purchased from Blondiau and lent to MoMA for the exhibition were listed in two groups: those in Isaacs's personal possession and those in the collections of the 135<sup>th</sup> Street Branch of the New York Public Library. Isaacs lent a maternity figure from Belgian Congo as well as a series of knives, daggers and scimitars, eight scalpels and an amulet, while the 135<sup>th</sup> Street Branch Library included two masks from "French Congo"; however, none of these works were reproduced in the *African Negro Art* catalogue.<sup>428</sup> Although Sweeney met with Locke personally early in 1934 as preparations for the show began, the MoMA archives clearly demonstrate that Ratton, and not Locke, was his primary interlocutor.<sup>429</sup>

Sweeney's preference for white European collectors and dealers of sub-Saharan African art reified a colonialist approach to African studies and a racist understanding of authority. Such deliberate disengagements ultimately function as erasures. Helen M.

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<sup>427</sup> James Johnson Sweeney, "Previous Exhibitions of African Art," *African Negro Art* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1935), 22. James Johnson Sweeney, "Thanks," *African Negro Art* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1935), 8.

<sup>428</sup> James Johnson Sweeney, "Catalogue," *African Negro Art* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1935), 50.

<sup>429</sup> Letter from James Johnson Sweeney to Alain Locke, May 17, 1934 thanking him for visit of that previous Monday. Museum of Modern Art Archives, MoMA EXHS 39.3, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Shannon's research into Black Americans' approach to what Locke termed, "the art of the ancestors," demonstrates that his exhibition's seeming disappearance from the history of the field of twentieth-century art rests in the differing priorities and access to institutional power structures of the white and Black avant-gardes. Furthermore, the methods of displaying sub-Saharan African artworks deployed by both Black and white curators compounded the disaggregation of artists in the diaspora from their contemporaries on the African continent.

#### From Artifact to Art: The White Cube and the Erasure of the African Artist

*The New York Times* critic Edward A. Jewell emphasized the possibility of a purely aesthetic encounter with the African works on display at MoMA, divorced from any socio-historic or ethnographic knowledge. He asserted that Sweeney had shown "distinguished taste" in establishing formal relationships among the works, but also cautioned visitors to, "check their preconceived ideas, their prejudices and all narrow standards at the door [...] Rid of these encumbrances, one finds it possible to make rapid progress -- not in the matter of deep understanding, perhaps, but at any rate in the matter of orientation."<sup>430</sup> Jewell's commentary reflects Sweeney's approach, articulated explicitly in his introductory remarks to the *African Negro Art* catalogue.

Eschewing contextual information about the epistemologies of the manufacturers of these works, Sweeney insisted that,

In the end, however, it is not the tribal characteristics of Negro art nor its strangeness that are interesting. It is its plastic qualities. Picturesque or

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<sup>430</sup> Edward Alden Jewell, "African Negro Art on Exhibition Here: An Unusual Show Opens with Reception at Museum of Modern Art," *The New York Times*, March 19, 1935.



exotic features as well as historical and ethnographic considerations have a tendency to blind us to its true worth. This was realized at once by its earliest amateurs. Today with the advances we have made during the last thirty years in our knowledge of Africa it has become an even graver danger. Our approach must be held quite conscientiously in another direction.<sup>431</sup>

In other words, for Sweeney, contemporary appreciation of African works must be purely aesthetic, in consonance with the attitude espoused by the white European artists represented in MoMA's collection. Sweeney concludes that, "The art of Negro Africa is a sculptor's art. As a sculptural tradition in the last century it has had no rival. It is as sculpture that we should approach it."<sup>432</sup> Sweeney disavows the necessity of ethnographic information in order to "elevate" African works to the status of art in the process freezing them into static sculptures.

Sweeney's understanding of African works articulated in the catalogue for *African Negro Art* departs from the curators of the exhibition at the Galerie Pigalle. As discussed in the previous chapter, Loeb, Ratton, and Tzara asserted that African and Oceanic artworks should be situated within a long history of their respective contexts, rather than assigned a timeless past.<sup>433</sup> Despite the shared interest in their formal qualities, the organizers' exhortation to apply the methodologies of art historical analysis to African material cultures was predicated on understanding the historical context of its community of origin. Whereas Sweeney placed African art outside of time, Tzara, Loeb

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<sup>431</sup> James Johnson Sweeney, "The Art of Negro Africa," *African Negro Art* (New York, NY: The Museum of Modern Art, 1926), 21.

<sup>432</sup> Sweeney, "The Art of Negro Africa," 21.

<sup>433</sup> Tristan Tzara and Charles Ratton, *Exposition d'art africain et d'art océanien* (Paris: Galerie Pigalle, 1930), 5.

and Ratton sought a history of African art grounded in Africa, although nevertheless one embedded firmly in a Western teleology.

Sweeney's installation similarly contrasts with that of the curators of the exhibition at the Galerie Pigalle, transposing the canon established by Loeb, Ratton and Tzara to MoMA's developing white cube. For example, both exhibitions included *d'mba* belonging to Pablo Picasso and Georges Salles, but these were installed in very different ways. Whereas Tzara, Ratton and Loeb reconstructed the raffia accoutrements on Picasso's object in order to emphasize its former role as an element of a masquerade ensemble (Fig. 3.22), Sweeney installed Georges Salles's headdress on a single pedestal in order to emphasize its transformation into a fine art sculpture (Fig. 4.5). Further, at MoMA the *d'mba*'s placement adjacent to three other works – a *chi-wara*, a two-tiered bowl, and an anthropomorphic element of a reliquary – established continuity of medium while emphasizing differences in form and reinforced the perception of the singularity of each. At the Galerie Pigalle, the *d'mba* stood along one wall, arranged with other items in different media and from different geographic regions and time periods.

Sweeney's approach to displaying smaller scale works also differed from his predecessors. Arranged in both upright and horizontal vitrines, the installation in Paris allowed visitors to examine the works closely and from overhead; however, the placement of some cases against columns prevented them from being examined on all sides. In New York, by contrast, Sweeney deployed double-sided vitrines jutting out from the main gallery walls to display works in the round (Fig. 4.6). In these cases, he arranged the artworks at intervals of three to four inches – a bit farther apart than at the Galerie Pigalle – to allow for comparison as well as apprehension of their unique characteristics.

Unlike Tzara and his co-organizers, Sweeney grouped objects by type – as in one room where they arranged smaller masks and textiles in two separate configurations (Fig. 4.7). While the installation at the Galerie Pigalle drew attention to the diversity of artistic production from these two continents through material and scalar juxtapositions in close proximity, the installation at MoMA highlighted stylistic variation within typologies of objects spaced far apart.

Sweeney's display differed from another notable French exhibition that incorporated so-called *arts primitifs*: *The Surrealist Exhibition of Objects (L'exposition surréaliste d'objets)* organized the following year by André Breton at Ratton's gallery in Paris. For this exhibition, held in the ground floor space at the rue de Marignan for just one week (from May 22 to 29, 1936), Breton displayed Indigenous works from the Americas and the Pacific held by Paris-based avant-garde artists alongside their own creations, as well as those of surrealists in Belgium and the United Kingdom, found objects, and natural specimens (Fig. 4.8). The placement of objects in the space did not distinguish by medium, geography or chronology, but nevertheless played upon certain formal similarities, highlighting and pairing works according to scale and color palette through proximity in the vitrines.

Paul Eluard's essay, "Customs of the Tropics" ("*L'habitude des Tropiques*"), published that same year in *Cahiers d'art*, further explicated the surrealists' understanding of Indigenous objects from North America and the Pacific as facilitating

encounters, rather than inanimate things to be admired.<sup>434</sup> As Janine Mileaf astutely observes, “Rather than distinguishing carefully between surrealism and its influential predecessors, Breton practiced a method of incorporation not unlike that of ‘la plus grande France.’ He wrapped his desired antecedents within the realm of the surreal.”<sup>435</sup> In other words, despite its ethos of admiration, Breton’s strategy of displaying the objects from France’s colonies alongside those from the metropole in fact replicated the strategies of absorption associated with the French colonial project that the surrealists were aiming to critique.

Like *The Surrealist Exhibition of Objects* itself, Claude Cahun’s *Object* (Fig. 4.9), instantiated visually Breton’s repeated assertion that the affinity between the products of self-conscious surrealist artists and other varied works rested in their ability to generate reverie. *Object* (seen on the far left of the bottom row of the bookshelf at the left of the installation shot alongside a miniature cast of the Venus de Milo and a botanical specimen in a glass case) consists of a doll’s hand, a cloud-shaped piece of wood, and a tennis ball painted with a wide-open eye sprinkled with hair. The assemblage perches on a base inscribed with the phrase, “The Marseillaise is a revolutionary song, the law punishes counterfeiters with forced labor.”<sup>436</sup> While scholars have focused primarily on the psycho-sexual discomfort sparked by Cahun’s bricolage techniques, the phrase – a combination of a Popular Front slogan and a line from the Belgian franc – connects *Object* to the debates among the international avant-garde about the role of art in social

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<sup>434</sup> Janine Mileaf, “Chapter 4 – Surrealist Politics of Exhibition: Juxtaposition, Ethnography, Revolution,” *Please Touch: Dada and Surrealist Objects after the Readymade* (Hanover, MA: Dartmouth College Press, 2010), 149.

<sup>435</sup> Mileaf, “Chapter 4,” 140.

<sup>436</sup> “La Marseillaise est un chant révolutionnaire, la loi punit le contrefacteur des travaux forcés.” Steven Harris, “Coup d’oeil,” *Oxford Art Journal* 24: no. 1 (2001): 97.

movements and politics. Combining detritus to form an entirely new and uncanny creation, Cahun's *Object* exemplifies Breton's assertion that, "any wreck within reach of our hands must be considered a precipitate of our desire."<sup>437</sup> For Breton, the surrealist object was characterized solely by its potential for activating an embodied response to art, rather than political didacticism; its specific time or place of production was not of primary importance.

Sweeney's understanding of the power of art is similar to that of the Bretonian surrealists – as indeed, he may have been influenced by his encounters with members of the circle based in Paris during his research visit, if not before. As Marcia Brennan notes, "Such privileging of subjective experience is consistent with modernist constructions of mysticism as primarily an individual, subjective, and often paradoxical phenomenon."<sup>438</sup> Sweeney and the surrealists espoused an approach to thinking about artistic processes tethered to a discrete object apprehended by a white bourgeois male subject.<sup>439</sup> Indeed, the primacy of Western aesthetic standards was explicitly stressed by MoMA in the exhibition's traveling portion: only art institutions were selected to participate, and Evelyn Courter, secretary in the Department of Circulating Exhibitions, included instructions on how to display the sculptures using the museum's method for each institution.<sup>440</sup> Considering the reception of sub-Saharan African art by the Black

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<sup>437</sup> "Toute épave à portée de nos mains doit être considérée comme un précipité de notre désir." André Breton, *Exposition surréaliste d'objets* (Paris : Galerie Charles Ratton, 1936).

<https://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100858821>

<sup>438</sup> Marcia Brennan, "Modernism's Mystical Subjects: An Introduction," *Curating Consciousness: Mysticism and the Modern Museum* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 21.

<sup>439</sup> Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush ed., *Prehistories of the Future: the Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).

<sup>440</sup> Virginia-Lee Webb, "The Traveling Exhibition of Sculptures," *Perfect Documents: Walker Evans and African Art, 1935* (New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. for The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 24.

American avant-garde further highlights the segregated histories of modernist art and the functionalist approach to these objects by both groups.

“Ancestral” Legacies: The Afro-American Avant-Garde’s Reception of Sub-Saharan African Art

Long before MoMA’s 1935 exhibition and a decade before Marius de Zayas’s 1914 exhibition at 291, American artists and critics of African descent had debated the characteristics of Black art and its role in the wider culture of the United States and globally. After emancipation in the United States, Black leaders propounded two alternative visions of advancing their community, namely the vocational education sought by Booker T. Washington, and the intellectual pursuits propounded by W.E.B. DuBois’s notion of the Talented Tenth.<sup>441</sup> In the period before the Harlem Renaissance, Afro-American intellectuals connected their heritage to the northeast corner of the African continent, collectively termed “Ethiopia,” prioritizing an imagined affinity over their ancestral ties to western and central Africa.<sup>442</sup> In his writing during the First World War, DuBois propounded an understanding of Black contributions to world art that emphasized mimetic traditions, in an effort to combat the distorted representations of

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<sup>441</sup> Booker T. Washington, “Industrial Education for the Negro (1903),” *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today* (New York, NY: AMS Press, 1970), 1-30. W.E.B. DuBois, “The Talented Tenth (1903),” *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today* (New York, NY: AMS Press, 1970), 31-76.

<sup>442</sup> Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: the Afro-asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

Black bodies prevalent in the public sphere – including those deployed in 1921 by Philippe Soupault in *The Matchbox* discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation.<sup>443</sup>

Like DuBois, Locke believed that culture would play a central role in transforming the perception and role of African descended peoples in modern society. In an essay included in his anthology of fiction, poetry and essays by black authors entitled *The New Negro*, published in 1925, Locke argued that, “The especially cultural recognition they win should in turn prove the key to that revaluation of the Negro which must precede or accompany any considerable further betterment of race relationships.”<sup>444</sup> However, he emphasized the importance of efforts like those of Marcus Garvey, one of the founders of pan-Africanism, in fostering global Black solidarity, while maintaining that Black Americans’ desires were fundamentally American.<sup>445</sup> Locke’s views precipitated a lively debate about the role of art in public life, as well as the tension between the shared qualities of experience among Black Americans and struggles for the emancipation of people of African descent globally.

Perhaps the most notable of these exchanges was that between the poet Langston Hughes and the critic George Schuyler in the pages of *The Nation* the year after the publication of Locke’s anthology. In his essay, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” Hughes identifies “this urge within [the Negro] race towards whiteness, the desire to pour racial individuality into the mold of American standardization, and to be as little Negro and as much American as possible” as detrimental and indeed antithetical to

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<sup>443</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, “Along the Color Line: Music and Art,” *The Crisis* 9 (January 1915); “Criteria of Negro Art,” *The Crisis* (October 1926).

<sup>444</sup> Alain Locke, “The New Negro [1925],” *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present*, ed. Angelyn Mitchell (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 31.

<sup>445</sup> Locke, “The New Negro,” 30.

the creation of Black art.<sup>446</sup> In contrast to Hughes's espousal of aesthetic pan-Africanism, in "The Negro Art Hokum" Schuyler argues for the parity of experience between Americans of African and European descent – regardless of their manner of arrival in the United States. Further, he held that to suggest otherwise is to reinforce bigoted logic.<sup>447</sup>

Locke had, in fact, attempted to reconcile the tension between American nationalism and global Black liberation movements in his essay "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts," published in the Harlem issue of *Survey Graphic* two years prior to the debate between Hughes and Schuyler played out in the pages of *The Nation*. Locke writes,

So there would be little hope of an influence of African art upon the western African descendants if there were not at present a growing influence of African art upon European art in general. But led by these tendencies, there is the possibility that the sensitive artistic mind of the American Negro, stimulated by a cultural pride and interest, will receive from African art a profound and galvanizing influence."<sup>448</sup>

Locke here identifies the trend described by Lemke seventy years later, namely the introduction of Black Americans to their cultural heritage through the conduit of white Europeans. He identifies the rupture wrought by enslavement and Christianity – through both forced conversion and legislation prohibiting any other religious forms – as rendering the artworks of their forefathers as strange to Black Americans as to their white counterparts. Ultimately, Locke identifies "the lesson of discipline, of style, of technical

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<sup>446</sup> Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain [1926]," *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present*, ed. Angelyn Mitchell (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 56.

<sup>447</sup> George Schuyler, "The Negro Art Hokum [1926]," *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present*, ed. Angelyn Mitchell (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 52.

<sup>448</sup> Alain Locke, "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts," *The Works of Alain Locke*, ed. Charles Molesworth (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 189.



control pushed to the limits of technical mastery,” as the primary potential source of inspiration for the New Negro artist.<sup>449</sup>

In contrast to DuBois’s interest in the artworks of the great ancient kingdoms of the continent with mimetic artistic traditions such as those of Egypt, Ethiopia, and what is today Nigeria, Locke emphasized what he termed African art’s “limitless wealth of decorative and purely symbolic material.”<sup>450</sup> He concludes his essay, writing, “Design, and to a lesser degree, color, are its original *fortes*. In this aspect of the folk tradition, this slumbering gift of the folk temperament that most needs reachievement and reexpression [sic].”<sup>451</sup> In other words, for Locke, sub-Saharan African art represented a usable past for the New Negro artist. As Shannon demonstrates, Locke’s prioritization of utilitarian works such as textiles and housewares in his own collecting and exhibition practice, as discussed above, was derived from his study of the eighteenth century German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder’s theory of folk culture.<sup>452</sup>

While Locke framed sub-Saharan African art as the racially-based cultural inheritance of Black Americans, he nevertheless failed to acknowledge the contemporaneity of the artists responsible for the production of many of these works. Like Sweeney, Locke placed African artistic production in a timeless past. Similarly, while Locke’s interest in collective uplift through art stands in contrast to Sweeney’s framing of art as an individual undertaking and experience, both concepts ultimately instrumentalize the works of Africans.

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<sup>449</sup> Locke, “Legacy of the Ancestral Arts,” 189.

<sup>450</sup> Locke, “The Legacy of Ancestral Arts,” 193.

<sup>451</sup> Locke, “The Legacy of Ancestral Arts,” 193.

<sup>452</sup> Shannon, “Chapter V,” 241-245.

How Locke's understanding of sub-Saharan African art was articulated in exhibition spaces is unfortunately largely lost to historians today. In addition to the exhibition in midtown Manhattan, Locke organized a national campaign to raise awareness about the Harlem Museum of Art through a traveling exhibition. Objects from The Blondiau-Theatre Arts Collection were displayed at the Art Institute of Chicago from November 16 to December 1, 1927 as part of the "Negro in Art Week," as well as the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester, NY and the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo from December 1927 through February 1928.<sup>453</sup> That spring the collection made the rounds at several historically-Black colleges including the Hampton Institute and Fisk University in late April and early May, and Howard University in June. However, the only verified documentation of these initiatives consists of James Van Der Zee's photograph of the selection of objects on view in the special collections room of the 135<sup>th</sup> Street library installed after exhibition at the New Arts Circle closed (Fig. 4.10).<sup>454</sup> The majority of the objects were installed in two vitrines, one freestanding and the other along the wall, while three masks and a basket were placed above the glass cases holding prints.

The connection between Locke's Harlem Museum of Art and MoMA's commitment to engaging racially diverse audiences remains unaddressed in the literature on *African Negro Art*. Although MoMA kept African and European art objects separated within their overall exhibition programming, the curatorial approach stemmed from a pedagogy of aesthetic appreciation rooted in colonial humanism.

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<sup>453</sup> Shannon, "Chapter V," 272.

<sup>454</sup> Shannon, "Chapter V," 273.

Colonial Humanism – MoMA’s Engagement with Black Americans around *African Negro Art*

Sweeney’s deployment of African works at MoMA was predicated in an idea of a global history of art, laid out by Tzara, Ratton and Loeb at the Galerie Pigalle in 1930, and by Locke three years before him.<sup>455</sup> In the catalogue for *African Negro Art*, Ratton cited this paradigm explicitly, concluding his remarks with the following benediction:

May this New York exhibition, thanks to the curiosity and excitement that it has already awakened, stimulate cooperation in this research, which will write a gigantic chapter of humanity.<sup>456</sup>

Furthermore, Ratton centered the European avant-gardes’ designation of African works as art and stressed Europeans’ increasingly sophisticated understanding of these artworks. He claims that, “We have travelled a long way since then and we have come to judge Negro art by very different standards from those of its first critics whose writings still bear witness to their opinions.”<sup>457</sup> In contrast to the skepticism expressed in the preface to the Pigalle exhibition catalogue that he co-authored with Tzara, here Ratton emphasized ethnography’s ongoing contributions to knowledge about African culture. He maintains that, “But now if we want to go further, we must turn to ethnography, to history. [...] We must write page by page into any empty book the history of a continent which did not know how to write.”<sup>458</sup> Despite Ratton’s rhetoric of shared humanity and artistic achievement, the lowly position of the African continent within the “Family of Man”

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<sup>455</sup> Yaëlle Biro, “De Pigalle (1930) à la Maison des artistes (1911): une généalogie à rebours,” *Galerie Pigalle Afrique Oceanie – 1930. Une Exposition Mythique*, ed. Charles-Wesley Hourdé and Nicolas Rolland, ed. (Paris: Somogy editions d’art, 2018), 30-93. Biro’s geneology is limited to European exhibitions.

<sup>456</sup> Charles Ratton, “African Negro Art,” *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 2, no. 6/7 (1935): 3.

<sup>457</sup> Ratton, “African Negro Art,” 2.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*

becomes clear.<sup>459</sup> As numerous scholars have demonstrated, MoMA curator Edward Steichen's 1955 exhibition of that name was predicated on a racialized system of measuring human accomplishment that necessarily placed Black subjects in the lowest position within the hierarchy.<sup>460</sup> Similarly to Steichen's exhibition twenty years later, Sweeney framed African works' admittance into Western canons of art as unequivocally positive. The reason for these works' circulation in Western museum collections – settler colonialism's rapacious consumption and exportation of both natural and human resources – is sidestepped in universalistic rhetoric.<sup>461</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the value of African works remained rooted in their role as models for solving the aesthetic problems of white Paris-based artists in the early twentieth century. Writing to Louis Carré in response to the dealer's offer of a donation on May 25, 1935, Sweeney stated that MoMA was interested in,

possessing works which are directly relevant to painting in Paris of the years 1906-15 at which time Negro art was so influential. Masks from the Cameroon or Ivory Coast such as were imitated by Picasso and Modigliani

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<sup>459</sup> The work of three years' preparation, Edward Steichen's exhibition *The Family of Man* presented 503 images of 68 different places by 273 photographers in varying sizes in an installation encompassing several floors of the museum. Edward Steichen, *The Family of Man* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1955); John Szarkowski, "The Family of Man," *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-century at Home and Abroad* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1994); Eric Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition: The Family of Man and 1950s America* (Sante Fe, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1995).

<sup>460</sup> Numerous photography historians and cultural critics have examined *The Family of Man*. See, for example, Roland Barthes, "The Great Family of Man," *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill & Wang, 1972), 100-116; Alan Sekula, "The Traffic in Photographs," *Art Journal* 41 (Spring 1981): 15-25; Lili Corbus Bezner, "Subtle Subterfuge: The Flawed Nobility of Edward Steichen's Family of Man," *Photography and Politics in America: From the New Deal to the Cold War* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 121-174; Alan Sekula, "Between the Net and the Deep Blue Sea: Rethinking the Traffic in Photographs," *October* 102 (Fall 2002), 3-32; Louis Kaplan, "Photo Globe: The Family of Man and the Global Rhetoric of Photography," *American Exposures: Photography and the Community in the Twentieth Century* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 55-80.

<sup>461</sup> See Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-state: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

or by Matisse in his sculpture would be of decided interest to our Museum.<sup>462</sup>

In other words, to borrow Locke's phrase from his review but refuting his optimistic assessment, *African Negro Art* ultimately reinforced an idea of Africa "seen through a glass darkly."

In line with the patronizing rhetoric of colonial humanism undergirding the rationale for *African Negro Art*, Barr believed that it was imperative to bring the show's attention to Black communities in New York. In addition to providing materials for Locke's review, MoMA organized visits to *African Negro Art* for more than 700 students from Manhattan and the Bronx, in conjunction with the School Art League.<sup>463</sup> Barr hired Thomas Mabry, formerly an administrator at Fisk University, to coordinate these efforts, as well as general advertising campaigns and free admission days. The note in the Museum's Bulletin on Attendance stressed MoMA's efforts to market the show to Black New Yorkers, and marked an increase in the total numbers of visitors to an average of 1,000 visitors a day, or almost 6% of the general museum attendance.<sup>464</sup>

Furthermore, *African Negro Art*'s longevity was guaranteed as a result of Barr's campaign to ensure access to the exhibition for Black communities in the midwestern and

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<sup>462</sup> Sweeney even cited specific works in the permanent collection that he felt were influenced by African forms, making explicit the terms of African art's potential integration into MoMA's collections, writing, "With this letter I forward a copy of our Fifth Anniversary Exhibition catalog. A Negro object which resembles the forms used in the Modigliani #117, the Picasso #124 or the Matisse #181 would be of particular interest providing the piece was of good quality." James Johnson Sweeney to Louis Carré, May 25, 1935, Museum of Modern Art Archives, folder 39.5, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Darby English and Charlotte Barat discovered that the museum did, in fact, purchase two works from Carré which were deaccessioned in 2016. English and Barat, 21. Upon the reopening of MoMA's research facilities, I hope to determine whether these objects were acquired for the permanent collection or the study collection; if the latter, it would further reinforce the supporting role assigned to African objects in Barr's story of modernist art.

<sup>463</sup> Unidentified correspondent, "African Art Show Viewed by Pupils," *The New York Times*, April 14, 1935.

<sup>464</sup> *The Bulletin the Museum of Modern Art* 2, no. 6/7 (1935), 4.

southern regions of the country.<sup>465</sup> With a grant from the General Education Board of the Rockefeller Foundation, Barr hired Walker Evans to create images of the artworks included in *African Negro Art* for a photographic portfolio exhibition of the same name specifically for historically-Black institutions.<sup>466</sup> Of the 603 works in the exhibition, Evans photographed 404 in 477 photographs (twenty-four of these images were of objects lent by Tzara).<sup>467</sup> Evans selected seventy five prints for each portfolio to be circulated to sixteen venues in the United States (Map 2), and seven of them received free editions.<sup>468</sup> The directions from MoMA to each college, university, or library recommended that the photographs be hung in geographical arrangements, following the

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<sup>465</sup> Like Webb before him, John Monroe fails to acknowledge segregationist policies which fueled Barr's efforts to generate images of the objects included in the exhibition. John Warne Monroe, *Metropolitan Fetish: African Sculpture and the Imperial French Invention of Primitive Art* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019), 226-234.

<sup>466</sup> Virginia-Lee Webb, "Introduction," *Perfect Documents: Walker Evans and African Art, 1935* (New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. for The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 13.

<sup>467</sup> Virginia-Lee Webb, "The Portfolio of Photographs by Walker Evans," *Perfect Documents: Walker Evans and African Art, 1935* (New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. for The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 236-38.

<sup>468</sup> Venues and Dates for the exhibition of Evans' portfolio included: Hampton Institute (VA) from 11 - 25 Oct. 1935, Virginia State College (Petersburg, VA) from 1 - 13 Nov. 1935, Bennett College for Women (Greensboro, NC) from 23 - 26 Nov. 1935, Shaw University (Raleigh, NC) from 6 - 20 Dec. 1935, Atlanta University (Atlanta, GA) from 17 - 28 Jan. 1936, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College (Tallahassee, FL) from 4 - 7 Feb. 1936, Dillard University (New Orleans, LA) from 12 - 26 Feb. 1936, Prairie View State College (TX) from 2 - 16 Mar. 1936; Wiley College (Marshall, TX) from 23 - 26 Mar. 1936, Tuskegee Institute (AL) from 8 - 22 Apr. 1936, Talladega College (AL) from 27 Apr. - 11 May 1936, Fisk University (Nashville, TN) from 15 - 29 May 1936, Howard University (Washington, DC) from 3 - 17 June 1936, Morgan College (Baltimore, MD) from 5 - 12 Nov. 1936, Lincoln University (Chester, PA) from 12 - 27 Nov. 1936, and NYPL Schomburg from 4 - 18 Dec. 1936.

Recipients of gratis mounted Walker Evans portfolios included Atlanta University (now Clark Atlanta University), Fisk University, Hampton Institute (now Hampton University), Tuskegee Normal Industrial Institute (now Tuskegee Agricultural and Mechanical University), Howard University, Dillard University and NYPL 135th Street Branch (now Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture). Purchasers of Walker Evans portfolios included New York University, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University, Victoria and Albert Museum, Musée d'ethnographie du Trocadéro, Paris (mounted), University of Chicago Library, Special Collections (mounted), Dartmouth College (mounted), Robert Goldwater on behalf of the Museum of Primitive Art (now The Met), Frederick Rhodes Pleasants, and James Johnson Sweeney (mounted).

order of Sweeney's catalogue.<sup>469</sup> However, no installation shots of the exhibits have not yet been located.<sup>470</sup> This loss of vital information about how Black scholars and curators chose to display Evans's portfolios presents another erasure of Black contributions to the development of twentieth-century exhibition design. While Ariella Azoulay's recent claim that the Evans portfolio was created to redress MoMA's segregationist policies seems extremely tenuous, as my research in MoMA's archives demonstrates, Barr's efforts certainly represent an impoverished redress to the segregationist legislative system termed "Jim Crow" rather than a direct challenge to both de-jure and de-facto racist policies among other American museums.<sup>471</sup>

Evans's approach to photographing the works – much like Sweeney's installation at MoMA – focused on fostering close examination of the physical properties of each by rendering the artworks in tightly cropped and compressed images, deploying frontal and profile views. As Webb notes, "Evans tailored his representations of the sculptures within his emerging photographic vision, as objects worthy of aesthetic admiration, rendered significant in a Western sense, yet stationary and inanimate in an art-museum context."<sup>472</sup>

For example, in these two images of Tzara's *beete* (Figs. 4.11 and 4.12), the photographer cropped the image so that the edges of the work seem to graze the frame. Although the profile view enables us to register the concave curve of the mask, the frontal view emphasizes the overall heart shape of the object, flattening out its three-dimensionality. Evans's images transformed African objects like Tzara's *kwele* mask

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<sup>469</sup> Webb, "Introduction," 42.

<sup>470</sup> Locating this archival material is an avenue to pursue in post-doctoral research at a future date.

<sup>471</sup> Ariella Azoulay, "Chapter 2: Plunder, Objects, Arts, Rights," *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (New York, NY: Verso Books, 2019), 91-93. My thanks to Z. Serena Qiu for bringing this publication to my attention.

<sup>472</sup> Webb, "Introduction," 15.

from a part of a performance ensemble into a “sculpture,” to use Webb’s term. Furthermore, the involvement of Barr, Evans, and Mabry in *African Negro Art* mirrors the French context insofar as white modernist artists and curators shaped the study and presentation of Black culture to diverse audiences, including those of African descent.

These phenomena did not go unobserved or uncommented on by Black American intellectuals and artists. In an essay published in the December 1934 issue of *Opportunity*, artist Romare Bearden offered a stinging critique of his American peers. He writes,

It is interesting to contrast the bold way in which the African sculptor approached his work, with the timidity of the Negro artist of today. His work is at best hackneyed and uninspired, and only mere rehashings from the work of any artist that might have influenced him. They have looked at nothing with their own eyes – seemingly content to use borrowed forms. They have evolved nothing original or native like the spiritual, or jazz music.<sup>473</sup>

Bearden unfavorably compared his American peers of African descent with the makers from the continent who created the works that would be displayed at MoMA the following year. Bearden’s concept of sub-Saharan African art aligns with both DuBois and Locke in that he situates these objects as pre-modern and even ancient. However, his formulation departs from his predecessors insofar as he identifies the so-called distortion of figural representation as a formal model for contemporary Black American artists. He writes,

Modern art has borrowed heavily from Negro sculpture. This form of African art had been done hundreds of years ago by primitive people. [...] Of great importance has been the fact that the African would distort his

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<sup>473</sup> Romare Bearden, “The Negro Artist and Modern Art,” *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* 12 (December 1934): 371.



figures, if by doing so he could achieve a more expressive form. This is one of the cardinal principles of the modern artist.<sup>474</sup>

Bearden continues, citing Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco as exemplary modernists, combining European modernist techniques with quintessentially Mexican subject matter. He asserts, “If we study the work of these two men, it is evidenced that they were influenced by the continental masters. Nevertheless their art is highly original, and steeped in the tradition and environment of Mexico.”<sup>475</sup> For Bearden, then, contemporary Mexican art provides the most compelling model for Black American artists: art as an expression of their own experiences as modern subjects while drawing on their ancestral heritage in the forms of Central and West African art.

#### Entitled Speculation and The Limits of Authenticity

As the foregoing has demonstrated, artists, curators, and scholars along the color line in Europe and the Americas continually engaged in what I term “entitled imagining” about objects from sub-Saharan Africa, ultimately instrumentalizing these artworks to advance their own agendas. These projections necessitated thrusting their contemporaries from the African continent into a timeless primordial past. Such chronological telescoping is rooted in a fundamentally limited and indeed problematic understanding of “authentic” African art. As Sidney Kasfir pointed out in 1992, the before/after scenario of colonialism represents the source of the ongoing misunderstanding of African societies as isolated and ossified.<sup>476</sup> The application of labels of authenticity to sub-Saharan African

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<sup>474</sup> Bearden, “The Negro Artist and Modern Art, 371.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid.

<sup>476</sup> Sidney Kasfir, “African Art and Authenticity: A Text with a Shadow,” *African Arts* 25: no. 2 (1992): 41.

art produced during what European art historians term the modern period is predicated in a totalizing and reductive understanding of African societies rooted in a “social-evolutionary notion of disappearing cultures” prevalent in the nineteenth century.<sup>477</sup> The fact that Black American artists and scholars utilized the same paradigm as their white counterparts to distinguish themselves from their African contemporaries offers stark evidence of the way in which white supremacy twists and distorts the self-understanding of non-white peoples.

While Tzara cannot be extricated from the material and ideological conditions of European imperialism necessary for the accumulation of African works, in his role as a curator and critic, he did recognize the artists who manufactured the works in his collection as his contemporaries and attempted to account for their varied socio-historical contexts. The prevailing disregard for information regarding these works’ histories and roles within their communities of origin among modernist artists and critics represents another aspect of the foundational role of white supremacy in the field of art history. The application of European standards of artistic manufacture to African material cultures transformed masquerade ensembles into discrete objects and prioritized their stasis in the museum display contemplated by an individual visitor over their motion when animated by a performer within a community. These criteria, central to Locke and Barr’s approaches, were applied to the artistic practices of the European avant-garde as well, resulting in a limited notion of the complexity of twentieth-century art, and indeed, sidelining dada within that history.

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<sup>477</sup> Sidney Kasfir, “African Art and Authenticity: A Text with a Shadow,” *African Arts* 25: no. 2 (1992): 41.

## Dada: The Bridge between Fantastic Art and Surrealism

The chronology published in the catalogue accompanying the 1936 exhibition *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* (FADS) at MoMA begins with the innovations of 1910: “fantastically arbitrary dislocation and disintegration of natural forms,” and the integration of faux-bois, stencils and sand into Cubist pictures.<sup>478</sup> MoMA Director and chief curator, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., structured the exhibition’s narrative of “fantastic art” around the breaking down of the intellectual and physical space between the picture and the world, situating the *Exhibition of Surrealist Objects* at Galerie Charles Ratton in Paris earlier that year as its culmination. The authors listed the objects selected for the show: “Polynesian, African, Pre-Columbian art; ‘found objects’ both natural and man-made; ‘found objects assisted’ (i.e. slightly transformed); psychopathic objects; objects by Surrealist artists, etc.”<sup>479</sup> Constituting the only mention of so-called *arts primitifs*, the chronology failed to account for and track the way in which Indigenous objects from Africa, the Americas and the Pacific were a constant element in the development of both surrealist and dada artistic and exhibition strategies, the latter central to refining their own self-definitions.<sup>480</sup>

The prevalence of African works and cultural practices in interwar Paris was barely noted in the catalogue essay devoted to dada for *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*.

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<sup>478</sup> Alfred H. Barr, Jr., and Elodie Courter, “Brief Chronology: The Dada and Surrealist Movements 1910 to 1936, with Certain Pioneers and Antecedents,” *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, third edition, ed. Alfred H. Barr, Jr. (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1937), 53.

<sup>479</sup> Barr, Jr., and Carter, 64.

<sup>480</sup> The term ‘nègre’ has a distinct etymology from both of the words ‘negro’ and ‘primitif.’ Jack Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Black Peoples* (Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993). For the most recent discussion of the way in which the former term supplanted the latter, see John Warne Monroe, *Metropolitan Fetish: African Sculpture and the Imperial French Invention of Primitive Art* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019).

Written by poet and critic Georges Hugnet, Black art forms are nodded to in one brief yet charged sentence: “Dada, from then on [since its founding], has but one aim, to be subversive and, like Cubism, Futurism, negro music, exasperating to the public.”<sup>481</sup>

Hugnet placed jazz on equal footing with two major avant-garde movements, and situated its similarity to them in its public reception, namely consternation. Hugnet’s comments reflect the limited understanding of jazz among the European avant-gardes which focused on the music’s utility for the artists’ own aims of disruption, rather than its unique musicality.

With dada artworks comprising 109 of the total of 694 objects in the exhibition, *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* was the first and largest historicizing display of dada organized by a nonparticipant.<sup>482</sup> In contrast to his important but ultimately indirect influence on *African Negro Art*, Tzara’s loans formed the core of the dada component of Barr’s exhibition with fifty-five items, thirty-one of which were included in the traveling component, and twelve of which were purchased by MoMA at its conclusion, along with one gift.<sup>483</sup> Three of these works are now canonical components of not just MoMA’s collections but also dada history: Max Ernst’s *The Gramineous Bicycle* collage, Marcel Janco’s colored woodcut known as *Street Band*, and Francis Picabia’s ink on paper *Dada*

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<sup>481</sup> Georges Hugnet, “Dada,” *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, ed. Alfred H. Barr, Jr. (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1936), 16.

<sup>482</sup> Michelle Elligott’s Chronology in *Dada in the Collection* synthesizes and represents the archival records from which my research is drawn. Michelle Elligott, “Chronology,” *Dada in the Collection*, *Studies in Modern Art* 9, ed. Anne Umland and Adrian Sudhalter with Scott Gerson (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 306-310.

<sup>483</sup> Museum of Modern Art Archives, MoMA EXHS 55.5, Museum of Modern Art, New York. As Adrian Sudhalter has demonstrated, many of the works in Tzara’s possession were derived from his unrealized *Dadaglobe* project, which enabled him to build the collection from which Barr drew for the MoMA project. See Adrian Sudhalter, “How to Make a Dada Anthology,” *Dadaglobe Reconstructed* (Zurich, Switzerland: Scheidegger & Spiess for Kunsthaus Zurich, 2016), 22-69.

*Movement Chart*. Furthermore, Tzara donated Ernst's line block print with ink on paper entitled *Hypertropic Trophy*.

Yet this influential project – the pendant to Barr's earlier exhibition, *Cubism and Abstract Art* – nearly didn't happen!<sup>484</sup> On October 6, 1936, Tzara directly petitioned Barr to remove his loans from *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, expressing his concern about the show's alleged focus on surrealism and André Breton's contribution to the catalogue. In a letter dated October 6, 1935, Tzara related his concerns candidly,

But as soon as I got back to Paris, numerous rumors reached me, and I wish to point them out to you in the hope that there will be no misunderstanding to disturb our relations, which, I am happy to say, have so far been stamped with the most perfect cordiality. In effect, the rumor runs that the title of your exhibition would no longer be "The fantastic in art" or something similar as you told me during your visit, but that the very sense of your exhibition would have changed and become focused on Surrealism. On the other hand, and I also did not know it during your visit, it seems that the catalog would be prefaced by Breton.<sup>485</sup>

He framed his consternation about Breton's alleged involvement and the theme of the exhibition generally in terms of the possible disservice to dada artworks, writing,

A preface by Breton would not give me a sufficient guarantee of the objectivity necessary for the presentation of Dadaists' works - I have had

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<sup>484</sup> Anne Umland also discussed this episode and noted the fact that Tzara's collections formed the nucleus of MoMA's collections. However, her approach is a Eurocentric formalist one, focused on situating FADS in relationship to Barr's other notorious canon-defining exhibition, *Cubism and Abstract Art* (March 2-April 19, 1936), and subsequent revisitations including William Rubin's *Dada, Surrealism and their Heritage* (March 27-June 9, 1968). See Anne Umland, "Dada in the Collections: A Permanent Paradox," *Dada in the Collection*, Studies in Modern Art 9, ed. Anne Umland and Adrian Sudhalter with Scott Gerson (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 14-41.

<sup>485</sup> "Mais, aussitôt rentré à Paris, plusieurs échos me sont parvenus et je tiens à vous les signaler dans l'espoir qu'aucun malentendu ne vienne troubler nos rapports, lesquels, ce dont je me félicite, ont été jusqu'à présent empreints de la plus parfaite cordialité. Le bruit court, en effet, que le titre de votre exposition ne serait plus "Le fantastique dans l'art" ou quelque chose de semblable comme vous me l'avez dit lors de votre visite, mais que le sens même de votre exposition serait dévié et axé autour du Surréalisme. D'autre part, et je l'ignorais aussi lors de votre visite, il semble que le catalogue serait préfacé par Breton." Letter from Tristan Tzara to Alfred H. Barr, Jr. dated October 6, 1935, Museum of Modern Art Archives, MoMA EXHS 55.5, Museum of Modern Art, New York. For an alternative translation, see page 16 of Anne Umland's essay in *Dada in the Collection* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 16.

proof to that effect - and, on the other hand, make the presentation of these works subordinate to an other enterprise; this seems to me not to correspond entirely to the spirit in which they were conceived.<sup>486</sup>

Barr replied to Tzara a month later to explain the misunderstanding, stating the parameters of Breton's unfulfilled involvement.<sup>487</sup> He informed Tzara that many of his loans were being reproduced in the catalogue and assured him that, "[...] Dada holds a very important place in the exhibition. This, I believe, will interest you for I believe that you were, more than anybody else, the chef d'école of that movement."<sup>488</sup> Somewhat shameless flattery perhaps, but also true: Tzara's withdrawal from the exhibition, as the movement's chief archivist, would have effectively erased dada from Barr's influential framing of the development of European modernist art as falling into two strains – the fantastic and the abstract – by subsuming it to Bretonian surrealism.<sup>489</sup>

Tzara's concerns were, in fact, well-founded. As Tessel Baudin has demonstrated, Barr understood *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* not only as an opportunity to inform the United States public about the latest developments in international art, but also as an imperative counter to the art histories emanating from Nazi Germany.<sup>490</sup> Utilizing the

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<sup>486</sup> "Ces deux éléments tout-à-fait nouveaux, changent complètement mon idée concernant votre exposition. Dans le cas où l'un ou l'autre ces bruits seraient exacts, je me vois dans l'obligation de vous prier de ne pas exposer les objets, peintures et dessins que je vous avais prêtés. Une préface de Breton ne me donnerait pas une garantie suffisante sur l'objectivité nécessaire à la présentation d'œuvres dadaïstes - j'en ai eu des preuves dans ce sens - et, d'autre part, subordonner la présentation de ces œuvres à une entreprise autre, me semble ne pas correspondre entièrement à l'esprit dans lequel elles avaient été conçues." Museum of Modern Art Archives, MoMA EXHS 55.5, Museum of Modern Art, New York. For an alternative translation, see page 16 of Anne Umland's essay in *Dada in the Collection* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 16.

<sup>487</sup> Letter from Alfred Barr to Tristan Tzara, November 7, 1935, Museum of Modern Art Archives, MoMA EXHS 55.5, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

<sup>488</sup> Ibid.

<sup>489</sup> Michelle Elligott, "Chronology," *Dada in the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 2008): 308.

<sup>490</sup> Tessel Baudin, "Fantastic Art, Barr, Surrealism," *Journal of Art Historiography* no. 17 (December 2017).

term “fantastic” to refer to surrealism enabled him to connect the movement to German Expressionism, as well as propose a tradition of antirational and anti-real art.<sup>491</sup> Dada was the lynchpin of this argument. In the preface of the catalogue, Barr even went so far as to hyphenate the two movements, and cautioned readers to focus on formal – rather than ideological – connections between the Renaissance and Baroque works identified as their antecedents.<sup>492</sup>

To further reinforce his argument, Barr had commissioned Hugnet to write essays for MoMA’s *Bulletin*, derived from a series of articles he had written in *Cahiers d’art* in 1932 and 1934 that relied heavily on Tzara’s archives.<sup>493</sup> Ironically, Tzara had granted Hugnet access to his personal papers in the hopes that the young artist would provide a corrective to Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes “Histoire de dada” published in the *Nouvelle revue français* in July 1931.<sup>494</sup> In addition to dating errors, Ribemont-Dessaignes had portrayed Tzara as rigid and unoriginal, and disparaged the movement as destined to fail, containing within it the seeds of its own demise.<sup>495</sup> Tzara also took issue with David Gascoyne’s book, *A Short Survey of Surrealism*, published in London by Cobden-Sanderson the same year as his letter to Barr. Like Barr, Gascoyne positioned dada as a stepping stone for surrealism, asserting that, “Of all the movements that came out of

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<sup>491</sup> As Baudin notes, Barr’s understanding was in fact contrary to Breton’s understanding of surrealism as heightening reality, and thus not irrational but supra-rational.

<sup>492</sup> Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1936), 7-8.

<sup>493</sup> Georges Hugnet, “Dada,” “Surrealism,” *Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* vol. 4, nos. 2, 3 (November and December 1936). These essays were included in the second edition of the catalogue published in July 1937.

<sup>494</sup> Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, “Histoire de Dada,” *Nouvelle revue français* (July 1931): 39-52.

<sup>495</sup> Ribemont-Dessaignes, 52.

[Dada], surrealism is the only one still alive to-day, and this because it is fundamentally a revolution of ideas and not the forms of expressing them.”<sup>496</sup>

Presumably to Tzara’s disappointment, Hugnet’s texts were only a partial revision of the accounts published by Gascoyne and Ribemont-Dessaigues. Notably, while asserting that the dada spirit developed simultaneously in multiple avant-garde communities, Hugnet attributed the movement’s naming to Tzara, and framed dada painting as reinforcing the destructive work of his poetic efforts.<sup>497</sup> Further, in Hugnet’s account, Arp was the bridge between the two movements, resulting from his early experiments with chance in his ripped paper collages. Ultimately, as Tzara had feared and anticipated, in both Hugnet’s text and Barr’s chronology, dada—however essential and important—remained positioned as a mere antecedent of surrealism. As Anne Umland notes, the primary distinction between Hugnet’s original essays and the English translations supervised by Margaret Scolari Barr was the emphasis on New York City as another important origin site for the movement – a fact which makes total sense given MoMA’s ties to individuals and institutions in the U.S. government responsible for American imperialist policies.<sup>498</sup>

Despite being relegated to a supporting role in the chronology and Hugnet’s essays, the gallery assigned to the movement presented a marked difference from the remainder of *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* installation. Indeed, Barr seemingly took a cue from dada practice itself: the curator arranged selected small-scale works on paper in closely spaced configurations on dark-colored mattes adjacent to larger collage and

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<sup>496</sup> David Gascoyne, *A Short Survey of Surrealism* (London, UK: Cobden-Sanderson, 1935), 34.

<sup>497</sup> Hugnet, “Dada,” 15.

<sup>498</sup> Umland, “Dada in the Collection: A Permanent Paradox,” 20-21.



lithograph works (Fig. 4.13). The installation incorporated two sculptures – one placed on a pedestal and the other hung high up on the wall behind and to the left of the one below. The dada room stands in clear contrast to another room (Fig. 4.14) that included four large paintings and collage works of the 1930s by artists associated with the surrealist circle around Breton. Here each work is hung at eye-level, about a foot apart in what has become the standard way of displaying modernist European art, and – as the foregoing analysis has demonstrated – was applied by MoMA curators to sub-Saharan African objects as well.

Barr's installation for the dada room of *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* evokes the exhibition component of the 1920 Salon Dada at the Champs-Élysées Theater, cited by Hugnet in his essay and discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation. Although Barr's notes and correspondence in the archives yield no explicit references to the Galerie Montaigne exhibition in his planning for *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, he would certainly have been familiar with the dadaists' approach to exhibition design generally following a visit with Tzara at Avenue Junot in 1931.<sup>499</sup> Indeed, in this gallery alone, at least four of the works on display were loans from Tzara himself. In addition to images of Berlin dada installations reproduced in Huelsenbeck's *Dada Almanac*, one might also imagine an informal chat to have occurred over coffee during one of Barr's several trips to Montmartre...

Nevertheless, Barr chose to omit photographic documentation of the Galerie Montaigne performance and other dada events from both the installation and the

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<sup>499</sup> Postcard from Tristan Tzara to Alfred H. Barr, Jr. mentioning visit to Avenue Junot, postmarked 1931. Museum of Modern Art Archives, MoMA EXHS 55.5, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

catalogue, perpetuating an understanding of dada and indeed twentieth-century art as centered in object-based practices.<sup>500</sup> Barr's disregard for the movement's ephemeral time-based media has since been partially rectified by art historians, as demonstrated by the voluminous literature on dada performance in recent years.<sup>501</sup> However, those studies fail to rigorously account for the role of ethnography and entitled imaginings about so-called primitive material cultures in dada's development – a failure which this dissertation aims to redress.

Indeed, Barr knew that African objects had informed the development of both dada and surrealism. In fact, in the preface to the *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* catalogue he acknowledged that these objects would remain absent from the presentation, writing, "The section devoted to the art of the past has been strictly limited. Only European art since the end of the middle ages is represented. Oriental art and the extremely relevant art of primitive and prehistoric man have not been touched."<sup>502</sup> One possible reason for this deliberate omission is that African objects had been presented at MoMA just the previous year with the goal of, to quote Locke, "reveal[ing] it for the first

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<sup>500</sup> Tzara lent two photographs of his plays 36.1529 and 36.1530) but neither were exhibited or reproduced in the publication accompanying the exhibition. Unfortunately, there is no archival documentation exists documenting Barr's rationale. FADS Loans, Museum of Modern Art Archives, MoMA EXHS 55.5, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

<sup>501</sup> See Gordon Fredrick Browning, *Tristan Tzara: The Genesis of the Dada Poem or, from Dada to Aa* (Stuttgart: Verlag, 1979); John D. Erickson, *Dada: Performance, Poetry, and Art* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984); Rose Lee Goldberg, "Chapter 3, Dada Performance: 'The Idea of Art and the Idea of Life,'" *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present* (New York: Harry N Abrams Inc., 1979), 34–48; Elmer Peterson, ed., *Paris Dada: The Barbarians Storm the Gates* (Farmington Hills, MI: G K Hall, 2001); Arnauld Pierre, "The Confrontation of 'Modern Values': A Moral History of Dada in Paris," *The Dada Seminars* (Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, 2005), 241-267.

<sup>502</sup> Alfred H. Barr, Jr. "Preface," *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* (New York, NY: The Museum of Modern Art, 1936), 7.

time in its own right as a mature and classic expression.”<sup>503</sup> However, this decision ultimately reinforced the false placement of sub-Saharan African makers into a timeless past, rather than acknowledging their contemporaneity with European and American artists. Indeed, as Jonathan Hay demonstrates, the artists producing works such as the infamous *kru* masks that inspired Picasso’s development of constructed sculpture, were themselves responding to conditions of modern life.<sup>504</sup>

### Radical Aesthetics and the Politics of Art – From Harlem to Nice and Madrid to Mexico City

In his article for *Opportunity*, Bearden discussed the necessity of art’s intertwining with everyday life, and indeed social justice. He relates a conversation he had after running into a colleague who had also studied with the German dada artist George Grosz at the Art Students’ League in New York. This former classmate had abandoned painting for the moment, preferring instead to direct his energies towards supporting the marine workers’ union. Bearden relates that, “We talked more about Orozco, who had lost his arm in the revolutionary struggle in Mexico. No wonder he depicted the persecution of the underclass Mexicans so vividly – it had all been a harrowing reality for him.”<sup>505</sup> For Bearden, Orozco’s artistic success was tied to his

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<sup>503</sup> Locke, “Legacy of Ancestral Arts,” 277. See also Mary Ann Calo, “Alain Locke and the Invention of ‘Negro Art’,” *Distinction and Denial: Race, Nation, and the Critical Construction of the African American Artist, 1920-40*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 58.

<sup>504</sup> Jonathan Hay, “Primitivism Reconsidered: Part I, A Question of Attitude,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 67/68 (2016-2017): 61-77. Jonathan Hay, “Primitivism Reconsidered: Part II, Picasso and the Krumen,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 69/70 (2018): 1-24.

<sup>505</sup> Bearden, “The Negro Artist and Modern Art,” 372.

truthful depiction of a shared reality between himself and his subjects predicated in participation in movements for social justice.

Bearden continues, asserting that Black American artists must emulate their Mexican peers. He writes,

So it must be with the Negro artist – he must not be content with merely recording a scene as a machine. He must enter wholeheartedly into the situation he wishes to convey. The artist must be the medium through which humanity expresses itself. In this sense the greatest artists have faced the realities of life, and have been profoundly social.<sup>506</sup>

In other words, for Bearden, the modernist artist is himself – alongside his chosen métier – the vehicle for artistic expression. Trained by one of the (at one time) most politically active members of Berlin dada and steeped in Black American culture at the height of the Harlem Renaissance, Bearden's essay demonstrates the way in which Black, Latinx, and white avant-garde artists not only lived and worked in overlapping circles of association, but also shared interest in the role of art and the artist in a world riven by injustice.

Although not discussed in art historical literature on the exhibition, *African Negro Art's* opening date coincided with the so-called Harlem Riots. On March 19, 1935, Lino Rivera, a 16-year-old Puerto Rican of African descent, was caught stealing a penknife from the S.H. Kress dime store at 256 West 125th Street (across from the Apollo Theater), and the owner called the police. By the time the officers arrived, a crowd had gathered outside. The storekeeper, afraid of what the crowd might do if the boy were arrested, asked the police to let Rivera go. The officers agreed, and the boy left by the store's back door. However, no one told the crowd what had happened, and soon rumors spread that the police had killed Rivera. More than 10,000 people took to the streets to

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<sup>506</sup> Bearden, "The Negro Artist and Modern Art," 372.

protest the alleged police brutality: the so-called riot continued through the night of March 19 and into the next day. When it ended, 125 people had been arrested, more than 100 people had been injured, and three individuals were dead—all of them of African descent. Property damage to approximately 200 stores was in excess of two million dollars. After the event, New York City Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, who had been in office for slightly more than a year, appointed a biracial commission to investigate. Ultimately, however, La Guardia suppressed the commission's report issued later that year because of its grimly accurate description of the conditions of Black New Yorkers.<sup>507</sup>

*The Baltimore Afro-American* covered the events that took place in New York in their March 30 edition. Beneath an image of a neighborhood store, its windows smashed, its door swinging open and goods tumbling onto the sidewalk, the unidentified reporter states that,

One of the stores in the path of the human tornado of Harlemites which swept Lenox to Eighth Avenue and from 110<sup>th</sup> to 145<sup>th</sup> Street. Fifty men and women were wounded and 300 store fronts were smashed, as 5,000 rioters marched on. It all started when reports circulated that a 16-year-old boy had been killed in an H.S. Kress five-and-ten-cent-store.<sup>508</sup>

Fascinatingly, the editors also included mention of *African Negro Art* along with a photographic reproduction of a bronze commemorative statue of an Oba of the Benin Kingdom (Fig. 4.16). The caption beneath offers a succinct description, reading, “Bronze head from Benin, Nigeria, is an African artwork of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Coral around neck

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<sup>507</sup> The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, “Harlem race riot of 1935” *Encyclopedia Britannica* (March 12, 2018) URL: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Harlem-race-riot-of-1935> Accessed December 18, 2018.

<sup>508</sup> Unidentified author, “Complete Photo-story of the Worst Race Riot in History of New York City,” *The Baltimore Afro-American* (March 30, 1935).

represents kingship or high rank. It is on display at the Museum of Modern Art.”<sup>509</sup> The deliberate placement of an image of this royal portrait into the story about civil disobedience in Harlem presents multiple possible meanings. In choosing an object that adhered to Eurocentric standards of artistic value rooted in mimesis, the editors of *The Baltimore Afro-American* could be understood as making an indirect argument for the humanity of contemporary Black folks given the artistic achievements of their ancestors. That argument thus also subtly renders a rather conservative criticism of the New Yorkers’ behavior deemed criminal by white law enforcement.

Bearden does not seem to share the sentiments of the editors in Baltimore. In his essay for *Opportunity* he explicitly included state sanctioned violence against Black Americans as just one of the appropriate subjects for the New Negro artist. He clarified, “I don’t mean by this that the Negro artist should confine himself only to such scenes as lynchings, or policemen clubbing workers.” Citing the eighteenth-century French genre painter Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin and English satirist William Hogarth as models, Bearden maintains that, “If it is the race question, the social struggle, or whatever else that needs expression, it is to that the artist must surrender himself. An intense, eager devotion to the present day life, to study it, *to help relieve it*, that is the calling of the Negro artist.”<sup>510</sup> For Bearden, then, the New Negro artist should depict both the positive and the negative aspects of everyday life that are unique to him as a Black American, as well as participate actively in the amelioration of the negative.

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<sup>509</sup> Unidentified author, “Complete Photo-story of the Worst Race Riot in History of New York City,” *The Baltimore Afro-American* (March 30, 1935).

<sup>510</sup> Bearden, “The Negro Artist and Modern Art,” 372. Emphasis mine.

While the archives have yet to yield information about Tzara's response to the far away, so-called Harlem Riots of 1935, if he had them, his increasing sense of urgency about issues of economic and racial inequality suggest that, in principle, he may have supported the efforts of demonstrators. Indeed, he took to the streets in Nice with the Popular Front just one year prior to Black New Yorkers in order to protest economic inequalities. Tzara conceived artistic expression and political freedom as fundamentally intertwined, writing in *Grains et issues*, published that same year, "It is not necessary to renounce poetry in order to conduct revolutionary social actions, but being revolutionary is an inherent necessity to being a poet."<sup>511</sup> Active within the Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists (*Association des Écrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires*), Tzara traveled to Spain to visit Madrid and Valencia as a delegate for the Alliance of Antifascist Writers (*Alianza de Escritores Antifascistas*) just as *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* was opening in New York.<sup>512</sup> Federico García Lorca's murder on 19 August prompted Tzara to write "On the Road of the Sea Stars" ("*Sur le chemin des étoiles de mer*,"), one of his most haunting poems of the interwar period, and eventually to assume the directorship of the Support Committee for Spanish Intellectuals (*Comité de soutien aux intellectuels espagnols*). In other words, like Orozco, he was radical inside and outside the studio.

Tzara was also, perhaps paradoxically, a supporter of the Soviet Union. On 10 July 1937, Tzara addressed the Second International Congress of Writers in the Defense of Culture in Valencia, Spain. In his speech, entitled "The Individual and the Writer's

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<sup>511</sup> Marius Hentea, *Tata Dada: The Real Life and Celestial Adventures of Tristan Tzara* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), 237.

<sup>512</sup> Hentea, 246.

Conscience (*L'Individu et la conscience de l'écrivain*),” he rhetorically asked, “Are we not sufficiently aware that the liberty which infringes on the liberty of another individual is called tyranny?”<sup>513</sup> Dismissing reports of Stalin’s extrajudicial executions of intellectuals by writers such as André Gidé (his account of his visit to Moscow – *Retour de l’U.R.S.S.* – was published by Gallimard in 1936), Tzara affirmed the importance of what political philosophers term “positive rights” to well-being over “negative rights” to freedom of expression.

Nevertheless, Tzara’s increasing concerns over dada historiography – exemplified in his heated words to Barr in 1936 – were a direct result of his ongoing strains with Breton and his circle of surrealists over these issues as the threat of fascism in Europe loomed. Tzara’s belief in the necessity of direct activism led to his split with the group. In March of 1935 – the same month that *African Negro Art* opened in New York amid the so-called Harlem Riots– Tzara renounced surrealism publicly in *Cahiers du Sud*.

Declaring automatic writing powerless and uninteresting, Tzara asserted that,

A recent attempt by a few surrealists, to constitute a "common front" of poetry in a Paris review, to which René Char and I refused to collaborate, a confusing attempt that I violently reprove, shows that poetry is considered by them as a goal in itself; by reason of its revolutionary affectation, I can never rise up enough against this.<sup>514</sup>

For Tzara, revolutionary art could not be formally innovative alone, but rather must also be tied to radical action in the world.

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<sup>513</sup> Tristan Tzara, “L’Individu et la conscience de l’écrivain,” *Œuvres Complètes* 5, ed. Henri Béhar (Paris: Flammarion, 1977), 56.

<sup>514</sup> “Une récente tentative de quelques surréalistes, de constituer un “front commun” de la poésie dans une revue parisienne, à laquelle René Char et moi avons refusé de collaborer, tentative confusionnelle que je réprouve violemment, démontre que la poésie est considérée par eux comme un but en soi, ce contre quoi, en raison même de l’affectation révolutionnaire de celle-ci, je ne saurais jamais assez m’élever.” Tristan Tzara, “Lettre aux Cahiers d’*Sud*,” *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Henri Behar (Paris: Flammarion, 1992), 258-259.



The debates among artists, writers, and intellectuals in Europe surrounding the role of art in political discourse and social change shares similarities with the conversations occurring among Americans of African descent both in Paris and across the Atlantic that laid the foundations for pan-Africanism. However, the inter-generational, life-endangering struggle against white supremacy facing Tzara's Black modernist colleagues like Locke and Bearden cannot be equated with his own struggles – a fact he himself noted later in life.<sup>515</sup>

Although Bearden did not mention the youngest of *Los Tres Grandes* by name in his article for *Opportunity*, both he and Tzara were likely aware of the work of David Alfaro Siquieros. While Barr included neither Rivera nor Orozco in *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, he exhibited Siquieros's *Collective Suicide* (Fig. 4.15) under the "Artists Independent of Dada-Surrealist Movements" category. Completed that same year, *Collective Suicide* presents Siquieros's vision of the Spanish invasion of Mexico. The foreground features armored Spanish troops on horseback opposite the members of the so-called Chichimec nations hanging, stabbing and leaping themselves to death.<sup>516</sup> Separated by a churning pit, a bowed and chained silhouetted figure and a broken statue symbolize the physical and cultural annihilation Chichimec speaking communities sought to avoid by suicide: enslavement and forced conversion to Christianity.

An activist for social reform in the wider world as well as in his art, Siquieros not only fought in the revolutionary army during the Mexican Revolution (1910–20) and

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<sup>515</sup> Madame Marie-Therèse Tzara, in conversation with the author. June 2019.

<sup>516</sup> "Chichimec" was a collective term used to refer to a conglomerate of small city-states to the north of Tenochtitlan by both the Aztecs and the Spanish. See Sean F. McEnroe, "The 'Chichimecs' of the North," *From Colony to Nationhood in Mexico: Laying the Foundations, 1560-1840* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 14-17.

organized a mineworkers union for his newly independent countrymen, but also joined the republicans to fight against fascist forces in the Spanish Civil War (1936–39).<sup>517</sup> Indeed, Tzara and Siquieros may have met during the latter’s visit to Valencia in late 1937 as part of the organizing committee for the Second International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture.<sup>518</sup> Like Tzara, Siquieros believed that revolutionary art called for revolutionary techniques, and founded the Siqueiros Experimental Workshop in New York the same year that *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* opened at MoMA.<sup>519</sup>

*Collective Suicide* exemplifies Siquieros’s radical rejection of painting conventions: the top third of the panel is airbrushed, while the abstracted figures were created with stencils and the swirling vortexes in the middle ground are pools of fast-drying commercial lacquer typically used on cars.<sup>520</sup> Simultaneously figurative and abstract, deeply engaged with history in order to understand the contemporary Mexican nation which Siquieros had fought to establish, *Collective Suicide* is a tour de force of radical art that aligns with the definitions espoused by both Bearden and Tzara.

## Conclusion

Both *African Negro Art* and *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* proposed and shaped an art historical narrative in which non-white artists were relegated into supporting roles,

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<sup>517</sup> Julieta Ortiz Gaitán, “David Alfaro Siqueiros: Pintura de caballete,” *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* 23: no. 78 (2001): 272-275. Elvira Concheiro Bórquez, “La huella de un rebelde: David Alfaro Siqueiros y la Revolución de Octubre,” *Prismas* 21: no. 2 (2017): 201-206.

<sup>518</sup> Hentea, 238.

<sup>519</sup> For information about Siquieros’s archives, see Irene Herner, “Rescate del archivo Siqueiros,” *Nexos: Sociedad, Ciencia, Literatura* (April 2006), 100+. Gale OneFile: Informe Académico [https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/apps/doc/A144565618/IFME?u=upenn\\_main&sid=IFME&xid=9f05efa6](https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/apps/doc/A144565618/IFME?u=upenn_main&sid=IFME&xid=9f05efa6)

<sup>520</sup> <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79146>

rather than active agents, in the development of modernism. The dismissive attitude towards Black artists' agency evinced in MoMA's framing of African artworks as catalysts and vessels for European creativity extended to the institution's active and well-documented disregard for American artists of African descent.<sup>521</sup> Furthermore, Sweeney's eschewal of contextualizing information for African artworks and Barr's omission of dada's radical tactics in the installation for *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* a year later reflect a shared understanding of artistic practice as constituted by objects alone. Ultimately, the fundamentally limited--and limiting--notion of artistic practice articulated in both *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* and *African Negro Art* perpetuated an inaccurate and limited history of modernist art which largely persists to this day.

When examined together, *African Negro Art* and *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* represent two sides of the same coin of the white supremacist underpinnings of what theorist Peter Bürger termed the historical avant-garde.<sup>522</sup> However, an alternative story of modern art can be discerned by stitching together the ideological position underlying Tzara's pushback against Barr's understanding of surrealism with his conception of African and Oceanic art as material manifestations of anthropocentric, terrestrial, and supra-natural relationality. In Tzara's formulation, true artistic expression is characterized by its embeddedness in the social fabric of its makers, thus freeing it from both a fixed material form as well as a singular meaning.

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<sup>521</sup> For an incisive recent analysis of the institution during this period, see Darby English and Charlotte Barat, *Among Others: Blackness at MoMA* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2019).

<sup>522</sup> Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). For the most recent analysis of the limitations and possibilities of Bürger's framework focused on the notion of the so-called fusion of art and life, see Doug Sinsen, "The Historical Avant-Garde from 1830 to 1939: l'art pour l'art, blague and Gesamtkunstwerk," *Modernism/modernity* Vol. 5, cycle 2 (August 2020) <https://doi.org/10.26597/mod.0154>.

## CONCLUSION

*“We perform a world into being, acting as much on anticipation as on antecedent.”*<sup>523</sup>

- Kristen Hastrup, 2005

In the introductory remarks to his 2015 book, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot identifies a fundamental condition of multiplicity and contradiction embedded in the term history: “The vernacular use of the word history thus offers us a semantic ambiguity: an irreducible distinction and yet an equally irreducible overlap between what happened and that which is said to have happened.”<sup>524</sup> The disparities and gaps among events and accounts of those events, are, in fact, he goes on to claim, themselves historical.<sup>525</sup> Focusing on the conditions and processes that foster historical narratives facilitates deeper understanding of the partiality of all histories. He writes,

For what history is changes with time and place or, better said, history reveals itself only through the production of specific narratives. What matters most are the process and conditions of production of such narratives. Only a focus on that process can uncover the ways in which the two sides of historicity intertwine in a particular context.<sup>526</sup>

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<sup>523</sup> Kristen Hastrup, “Performing the World: Agency, Anticipation, Creativity,” *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 25: no. 2 (2005): 11.

<sup>524</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “The Power in the Story,” *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2015), 3-4.

<sup>525</sup> “Yet it suggests also the importance of context: the overlap and the distance between the two sides of historicity may not be susceptible to a general formula. The ways in which what happened and that which is said to have happened are and are not the same may itself be historical.” Trouillot, “The Power in the Story,” 3-4.

<sup>526</sup> Trouillot, “The Power in the Story,” 25.

Furthermore, Trouillot asserts, attending to the situated-ness of the events, actors, and storytellers of history reveals their imbrication in systems of power and oppression:

“Only through that overlap can we discover the differential exercise of power that makes some narratives possible and silences others.”<sup>527</sup>

“Entitled Imaginings: Tristan Tzara, Dada, and the Idea of Africa” identifies and analyzes the processes and conditions that produced dominant understandings of dada aesthetics while simultaneously integrating contexts and narratives focusing on European colonialism and the twentieth-century Black avant-garde into those histories. In so doing, this dissertation acts much like the dadaists’ own *mana figa*, pointing clearly and directly at the ways in which artists, academics, critics, and collectors promulgated a narrative of modernist art that necessitated the silencing of others. The disparities between the events - reconstructed from a variety of sources ranging from personal correspondence to newspaper articles - and the dominant scholarly accounts of those events reveal how the ideologies of white supremacy animated the process of delimiting the category of modernist art and modernist artists.

The first and third chapters examine how Tzara’s dada aesthetics was informed by a notion of artistic production characterized by intention and assembly and was derived from two models: so-called ethnographic objects from Africa and the Pacific islands and cubist collage. In the group’s exhibitions, publications, and performances in Zurich between 1916 and 1919, Tzara promoted an omnivorous form of dada as inter-medial. As the term implies, his approach was necessarily consumptive, predicated in the networks of exchange among white artists in Berlin, Mantova, New York, and Paris, as well as the

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<sup>527</sup> Trouillot, “The Power in the Story,” 25.

epistemological frameworks of the emerging academic discipline of ethnography and the conditions of material extraction resulting from European colonization.

Examining Tzara's theorization of collage through the lens of his curatorial work with African art in the years 1930 and 1931 demonstrates how material juxtaposition remained foundational to his criticism in the fields of European art and African ethnography. Predicated on his synthesis of symbolist and surrealist understandings of poetry, Tzara used the term "fetish" in both his *Cahiers d'art* essay on collage and in the introductory remarks for the exhibition at the Galerie Pigalle, invoking Central African power objects in tandem with Marxist and Freudian theory. Taken together, these chapters tell a different story of the way in which the development of dada and ethnography in Europe were intertwined and draw attention to Tzara's place within an alternative narrative of the history of modernist art for the first time.

The second and fourth chapters bring forward two previously overlooked historical events: Soupault's blackface performance of 1921, and Tzara's involvement with two influential exhibitions at MoMA on African art and dada in 1935 and 1936, respectively. Soupault's seeming parody of a racist caricature stands in sharp contrast to Tzara's deployment of the sign of his own marginalized subject position for the June 10, 1921 opening events at the Galerie Montaigne. While the Paris dada group consistently deployed a form of satire in order to draw attention to the arbitrariness of prevailing aesthetic categories as well as the boundaries defining insider and outsider in European society, Soupault ultimately reified the racism he sought to criticize, demonstrating the limits of intentionality as a primary criterion for evaluating the artistic and ethical success of dada performance.

Both of MoMA's most influential exhibitions of the mid-1930s, *African Negro Art* and *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, were indebted to Tzara as an artist, a curator, and a collector, simultaneously fanning the flames of ongoing debates about dada's relationship to the then-dominant Bretonian surrealism which was intertwined with debates about the role of art in social change. Ultimately, however, both presentations propagated an understanding of modernist art as belonging to white Europeans, even as the museum acknowledged the inspirational role of objects created by unidentified African artists.

"Entitled Imaginings" follows selected African objects in Tzara's collections through multiple historical moments, tracking the shifting ideas projected onto these artworks through a variety of presentation formats and settings. Tzara differentiated himself from his colleagues along the color line by recognizing the contemporaneity of the unidentified artists who created the objects he collected, rather than placing these works outside time, isolated from their original contextual meanings. Using Tzara's life as a case study, "Entitled Imaginings" moves the historiography of "primitivism" beyond the generalizations associated with the 1984 Museum of Modern Art exhibition of the same title – rehearsed as recently as 2016 in the Museum Reitberg's *Dada Africa* – to demonstrate how specific African artworks, ethnographic texts, and ideological constructs profoundly informed the development of dada artistic practices.

#### Further Directions of Research

In a letter dated July 8, 1946, from Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906-2001), one of the founders of the Négritude arts movement and the future first president of Senegal, to

Tzara, Senghor expressed his happiness to see Tzara again and identified his fellow author as being in “respectful sympathy (*une respectueuse sympathie*),” with his work. The letter, along with an enclosed poem, and the envelope it was sent in, constitute three of the tantalizingly few traces of the interactions between African-descended members of the avant-garde and their European-born contemporaries in the archives held at the Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques-Doucet in Paris. My future avenues of research will gather together threads like this one to bridge the dividing line of 1945 in order to delineate a history of radical art from dada to decolonization, expanding my study to encompass the competing ideologies and policies of pan-Africanism and colonialism that met in the 1954 film *Statues Also Die* (*Les Statues meurent aussi*) commissioned by the Présence Africaine publishing house and the 1962 International Congress on African Culture held in what is today Harare, Zimbabwe, which featured numerous objects in Tzara’s collection.

Tzara’s assessment of the relationship between African and European art came to full fruition in his essay published in 1954.

While the doctrine of white racial superiority has gradually fallen into disuse – if only thanks to the retribution of peoples maintained in inferior status – we assist in the revaluing of arts previously considered barbaric, of these arts which were deprecated solely because their evolution was calculated on the historical timelines of so-called civilized peoples. Under this aspect, it is without doubt that certain artistic theories are the dissimulating, but skillful, transcription of the interest of the dominant classes, and that they reflect, ideologically transposed, so-called objective, racist dogmas, which, are nothing but the pseudoscientific expression of imperialist economics.<sup>528</sup>

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<sup>528</sup> Original: Tandis que la doctrine de la supériorité des races blanches sur les autres tombe graduellement en désuétude – ne serait-ce que grâce au redressement des peuples maintenus dans un état d’infériorité, - nous assistons à la revalorisation de tous les arts jusqu’à présent considérés comme barbares, de ces arts qui ont été dépréciés uniquement parce que leur évolution n’est pas calquée sur la démarche historique des



With this damning indictment of the material conditions undergirding the European system of aesthetic classification, which he himself had rebelled against in his youth, Tzara's idea of Africa traveled from dada to decolonization. From his early utilitarian interest in African objects as formally and epistemologically antithetical to European traditions to his ethnographically informed admiration for these works' aesthetic qualities and respect for his contemporaries of African descent, Tristan Tzara was a lifelong advocate for African culture.

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peuples dits civilisés. / Sous cet aspect, il n'est pas douteux que certaines théories d'art sont la transcription dissimulée, mais adroite, des intérêts des classes dominantes et qu'elles reflètent, idéologiquement transposées, ou soi-disant objectivées, les dogmes raciaux, eux, à leur tour, n'étant que l'expression pseudo-scientifique des impérialismes économiques. Tristan Tzara, "Sur l'art des peuples noirs," *Démocratie Nouvelle*, 1954.

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Figure 3.12 – Joan Miró (1893-1983). *Untitled*, summer 1929. Pencil and collage of papers on flocked paper, 108 x 72 cm. Private collection.

Figure 3.13 - Joan Miró (1893-1983). *Untitled*, 1929. Tarpaper, drawing paper, graphite; no dimensions. Museum Brandhorst (UAB 290).

Figure 3.14 - Joan Miró (1893-1983). *Object*, mid-July-November 1931. Oil on wood, nails, string, bone, and chickpea; 15 3/4 x 11 3/4 x 8 5/8" (40 x 29.7 x 22 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harold X. Weinstein. Museum of Modern Art (7.1961).

Figure 3.15 – Unidentified artist (Gabon). *Kwele*, before 1930. Wood, pigments. H. 25 cm ; W. 26 cm. Musée Barbier-Mueller (1019-80). Photo: Studio Ferrazzini Bouchet.

Figure 3.16 - Installation view, *Ethnographic Exposition of French Colonies*, Trocadéro Ethnographic Museum, Paris, 1931.

Figure 3.17 - Unidentified artist (Mali). *Boli*, before 1931. Earth mixed with beeswax, coagulated blood, wood; 44 x 59 x 24 cm. Musée du Quai Branly (71.1931.74.1091.1).

Figure 3.18 - Unidentified artist (Mali). *Kònò mask*, before 1910. Wood, coagulated blood; 23 x 16,5 x 59,5 cm, 2377 g. Musée du Quai Branly (71.1910.1.91).

Figure 3.19 - Unidentified photographer, Société des amateurs de photographie (France). Installation view, *Exposition d'art africain et océanien*, Théâtre Pigalle, Paris, 1930. Societe Francais de Photographie FRSFP\_1080im\_SN\_0020\_2.

Figure 3.20 - Unidentified photographer, Société des amateurs de photographie (France). Installation view, *Exposition d'art africain et océanien*, Théâtre Pigalle, Paris, 1930. Societe Francais de Photographie FRSFP\_1080im\_SN\_0007\_2.

Figure 3.21 - Unidentified photographer, Société des amateurs de photographie (France). Installation view, *Exposition d'art africain et océanien*, Théâtre Pigalle, Paris, 1930. Societe Francais de Photographie FRSFP\_1080im\_SP\_0015.

Figure 3.22 - Unidentified photographer, Société des amateurs de photographie (France). Installation view, *Exposition d'art africain et océanien*, Théâtre Pigalle, Paris, 1930. Societe Francais de Photographie FRSFP\_1080im\_SN\_0033\_2.

Figure 3.23 - At the exhibition, *La Verite sur les colonies*, reproduced in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, No. 4, Dec. 1931.

Figure 4.1 - Unidentified artist (Democratic Republic of the Congo). *Ngady mwaash*, late 19th to early 20th century. Wood, pigment, raffia textile, cowrie shell; circa H. x W.: 13 x 10 1/4 in. (33 x 26 cm). Art and Artifacts Division of the Schomburg Collections, New York Public Library.

Figure 4.2 - Unidentified artist (Democratic Republic of the Congo). *Cup with openwork pedestal*, before 1930. Wood, 27.5 x 31 cm. Reproduced in *Exposition d'art africain et d'art océanien*, Galerie Pigalle, catalogue no. 249. Private collection.

Figure 4.3 - Unidentified artist (Mali). *Stool*, date unknown. Eroded hardwood, 34 cm. Current location unknown. Reproduced in Loudmer, catalogue no. 211.

Figure 4.4 - Unidentified artist (Côte D'Ivoire). *Mask*, n.d.. Wood, raffia. Private collection.

Figure 4.5 - Installation view, *African Negro Art*. Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1935. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN39.1. Photograph by Soichi Sunami.

Figure 4.6 - Installation view, *African Negro Art*. Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1935. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN39.1. Photograph by Soichi Sunami.

Figure 4.7 - Installation view, *African Negro Art*. Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1935. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN39.1. Photograph by Soichi Sunami.

Figure 4.8 - Installation view, *Surrealist Exhibition of Objects*, Galerie Charles Ratton, Paris, May 1936. Archives Galerie Charles Ratton et Guy Ladière, Paris.

Figure 4.9 - Claude Cahun (1894-1954). *Object*, 1936. Wood and paint with tennis ball, hair, and found objects; 5 3/8 x 6 3/8 x 4 in.. Art Institute of Chicago (2007.30).

Figure 4.10 - James Van Der Zee (American, 1886-1983). *Interior view of the Division of Negro Literature, History and Prints, at the New York Public Library 135th Street Branch*, 1928. Gelatin silver print; 21 x 26 cm. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division. The New York Public Library Digital Collections. <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/84c436c3-3f93-daea-e040-e00a1806547a>

Figure 4.11 - Walker Evans (1903–1975). *Untitled [kwele mask]*, 1935. Gelatin silver print; 24.5 x 19.4 cm. (9 5/8 x 7 5/8 in.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art (1992.5078).

Figure 4.12 - Walker Evans (1903-1975). *Untitled [kwele mask, profile]*, 1935. Gelatin silver print, no dimensions. Visual Resource Archive, Robert Goldwater Library. The Metropolitan Museum of Art (AF-13 Kwele J-1b).

Figure 4.13 - Installation view of the exhibition, *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, December 7, 1936–January 17, 1937, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN55.2. Photograph by Soichi Sunami.

Figure 4.14 - Installation view of the exhibition, *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, December 7, 1936–January 17, 1937, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN55.2. Photograph by Soichi Sunami.

Figure 4.15 - David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896-1974). *Collective Suicide*, 1936. Lacquer on wood with applied sections; 49" x 6' (124.5 x 182.9 cm). Museum of Modern Art (208.1937).

Figure 4.16 – Unidentified correspondent and photographer. “Complete Photo Story of the Worst Race Riot in History of New York City,” *The Afro-American* (Baltimore, MD), March 30, 1935.

## Map 2

### African Negro Art 1935-6

#### Traveling Exhibition

- Currier Museum of Art
- San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
- Cleveland Museum of Art
- The Arts Club of Chicago
- Milwaukee Art Museum
- Baltimore Museum of Art
- Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

#### W. Evans Portfolio Traveling Exhibition

- Virginia State University
- Bennett College
- Shaw University
- Atlanta University Center
- Florida A&M University
- Dillard University
- Prairie View A&M University
- Wiley College
- Tuskegee Institute
- Talladega College
- Fisk University
- Howard University

